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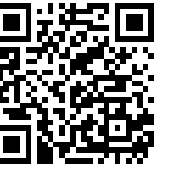

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THE VENGEANCE OF KALI

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Tales and Songs

from

An Assam Tea Garden

BY

MAURICE P. HANLEY

CALCUTTA AND SIMLA

THACKER, SPINK & CO

1928

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ALL the characters in this book are purely fictitious, and the Author will not hold himself responsible if by a mere chance they should happen to coincide with the characters of any living person.

MAURICE P. HANLEY.

LAOJAN TEA ESTATE,
ASSAM.

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PREFACE.

In submitting these Tales and Songs from an Assam Tea Garden to the Public, I do not lay any claim to their being literature of a high class. It is a subject as yet untouched on—little tales and episodes connected with Tea Planting life, the ups and downs, the joys and sorrows of us Planter folk—and as such may make interesting reading to Planters, for whom they were mainly written. If they should prove interesting reading to others as well, and help them to pass a pleasant hour or two in the company of this little book, it will be a great gratification to me. Being like our friend Mark Antony " a plain blunt man " the tales are simply and bluntly told, and with this information, I leave my reader, especially if he be a Tea Planter from the Assam Valley, to get on with the job and do the reading.

MAURICE P. HANLEY.

Laojan Tea Estate,
Assam.

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To—

I write of the days in our lives
When all was not rosy or fair,
We were youngsters—mere boys—don't forget,
And the country was oft hard to bear.
There was loneliness gripping our hearts,
And often it led us astray,
And we went the whole pace—more's the pity.
And few ever showed us the way.

But we stuck it, as most of us do,
We have grit quite enough of our own,
And we laughed in the eyes of our Fate,
And were happy as best we had known.
We are rough, if you will, yes and why not ?
As rough as the country we're in,
And the Good God above will bear witness
How hard 'tis to keep from all sin.

Some of us went to the dogs,
And supped all the pleasures of hell,
Others, who went the straight course,
Lived all their lives good and well.
I don't blame them the lads who were wild,
They were honest and straight, always kind,
They were mostly fools to themselves,
So, poor chaps, they were soon left behind.

I write of the days in our lives
When all was not rosy or kind,
And I think of the men I have met,
Good fellows, as ever you'd find.
They laughed in the eyes of their Fate,
And fought it from day unto day,
And they each did the best, as they thought,
And then silently went on their way !

MAURICE P. HANLEY.

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TALES.

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FI-AOU

It was mating time. Old *Seyal* got up, shook his shaggy coat and turning his head up to the sky gave the call to the pack.

Something moved in the undergrowth near him. An angry hiss and a dart, and a huge gliding monster shot straight at him. Old *Seyal* bared his fangs snarling, and sprang aside. It was a narrow shave, for *Wookho* the Python was hungry, and had visions of a nice tit-bit in the way of supper. As soon as he could, the gliding monster turned around to the attack again, but old *Seyal* was gone. Quick as lightning he sped, giving vent to the call of fear—"*Fi-aou.*"

From the distance he was answered by one of the pack, and soon forty throats were sending their gruesome shrieking call on the still afternoon air.

Sanderson, as he was going around *Kamjari*, heard it and wondered, for it was the first time he had heard a Jackal call in this peculiar manner. The Sirdar who was standing near turned to him. "The Huzoor listens to the cry of the Jackal," he said. "Yes, Booda," Sanderson replied, "I have heard many Jackals cry but not in that peculiar manner. What is the cause of it?"

"There are several stories told about it Huzoor, and one does not know which to believe. Some say it is their mating call, others that it is the call of the outcast Jackal which has been driven out of the pack for madness. Another story is that the Jackal only calls in this manner when he has been frightened by a tiger or leopard or some

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other wild beast. And then I have even heard people say that it is not a Jackal at all, but a Lynx which cries like this. We in this *Kooti* believe, Huzoor, that it is a Jackal which makes that noise, and that when he does so in the daytime it is a precursor of evil. Before the big sickness came, for many days the same sort of cry was heard in the daytime all over the place. Then this *Kooti* got it and many people died." "In my country," he continued, "there is a legend told about the Jackal, which, if the Huzoor would like to hear, I will tell him." "Yes," Sanderson said, getting interested, "I would like to hear it Booda, so go on."

"They say, Huzoor," he said, "that when the gods first created the animals of the earth, they made the Jackal one of the fleetest. In those days the Jackal lived on the flesh of deer and other animals, which he hunted in packs like the wild dog does now. Soon the swiftest denizen of the forest stood no chance against him, and would as easily fall a prey to him as a timid hare to a fleet dog. Then the devil, always looking for mischief to do, got hold of the Jackal, turned his head, and so filled his heart with vanity that he went around the jungle taunting and annoying all the other creatures in it. Meeting an elephant he would say 'O *Hathijee*, thou cumbersome son of a mountain, the flies even do not fear thee for all thy size, for thou art too slow to drive them away; and they laugh at thee, and tickle thy great big nose, till thou blow, and blow, and blow for pure helplessness, and waste good air and breath. Now, if thou wert like me, sleek and supple and agile, thou could'st run away from them and leave them many leagues behind. Wake thyself, thou slothful, ponderous creature' and darting

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in where the elephant would least expect it, he would give him a bite on the leg and run away. Thus he would treat all his other companions in the forest till at last he became the hated foe of all the jungle folk.

"Several times they set traps to catch him, but he was too cunning and always ran away from any danger. At last it got so bad that all the animals of the earth appealed to the Goddess Saraswati against him, and the Goddess ordered a Council to be held in the jungle at which she would judge between the Jackal and his accusers. For this purpose she summoned him to answer the charges laid against him. Now the devil once more got hold of the *Seyal*, and flattered him. 'Oh most beautiful of all living creatures,' he said, 'why dost thou fear Saraswati? Thou art greater and nobler than she, and being so fleet can defy her for she will not be able to catch thee.' The Jackal's heart was filled with more vanity than ever now, and he decided to insult the Goddess at the Council.

"The night appointed for the Council at last came, Huzoor. All the animals and birds of the jungle came to the appointed place at the appointed hour, but the Jackal was nowhere to be seen. Saraswati grew impatient and the other animals lost their tempers. At last, after they had been waiting about half an hour, the Jackal turned up. Saraswati rebuked him, and demanded an explanation for his lateness. 'Oh,' he replied, 'I saw a field rat on the road along here, and waited to kill it, and it did not please me to come before.' The Goddess became very angry, 'Dost dare to insult me, vermin, by not obeying my commands? I would turn thee into dust this minute, but in order that thou shouldst be fairly

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treated, I will hear the charges against thee first, and then deal with thee.' The first witness was the Deer. 'Even when he is not hungry he pursues me wantonly, and tearing my flanks leaves me to die, O Goddess, simply to satisfy his vanity. I claim protection from thee, O Mother.' Then all the other animals one by one laid their charges against him, and told the Goddess of the wrongs the Jackal had done them. The Goddess, after hearing them all, turned to the Jackal. 'What hast thou to say, thing of evil, in thy defence?' The Jackal put his tail between his legs and gradually sneaked nearer and nearer the exit. 'All thy powers thou hast received from me, and thou hast abused them by annoying thy fellow creatures. I gave thee fleetness.' 'Thou didst not, for if thou didst, Saraswati, catch me now' and away he sped from their midst like a flash of lightning before anyone could hold him. Then Saraswati, flashing forth fire from her eyes, pursued him, and before he had gone very far, caught him and brought him back to the Council. 'Now, O creature of evil, who is the greater, thou or I?' 'Mercy, O Goddess,' the Jackal cried. 'Thou art the Mother of all creation,' and he gave vent to his call of fear, 'Fi-aou,' for the first time.

"'Thou cravest mercy, cur, but thou wilt have none at my hands now. For thy evil deeds I curse thee. Thou shalt lose thy fleetness till the least of the fleet animals of the forest shall be able to beat thee in pursuit. Vermin and offal shall be thy portion instead of the princely food which was thy right till now. Thou shalt haunt the dwelling places of human creatures as a scavenger, and be despised by all creation of man, bird and beast.' The Jackal grovelled on the ground. 'Pardon, O

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Saraswati,' he pleaded, but the Goddess was adamant. Turning to the tiger, she said, 'Take you leper and cast him out of the assembly.' This the tiger did immediately, and bestowed many a buffet on him in doing so. From that day, Huzoor, the Jackal became a despised creature, detested both by man and beast alike, and lost all his power of fleetness, so that he has to rely on the cast-off food of others to fill his stomach, and is ever a scavenger in the track of dead and decaying substances. Such is the legend they tell about the Jackal in my country, Huzoor."

Old *Seyal* shook himself once more and pricked up his ears. From afar off he could hear the sounds of a ponderous creature crashing through the jungle. There was a thud and a cry, the dying cry of the Sambhur buck as it lay in the death grip of a tiger, He turned up his snout to the sky once more, and gave the call to the pack. From all around him he was answered, and one by one they came to him, their leader. Putting himself at their head, he trotted off, followed by the others, licking their lips in anticipation of the great feast before them.

"There they go, Huzoor," the old Sirdar said to Sanderson. "A tiger or leopard has killed something at the jungle edge, and the scavengers are off to get their share of it. If the Huzoor listens, in a little while he will hear the cry of fear and ill omen." From across the distance it came—the call of a solitary Jackal, warning his mates of danger. "Fi-aou ! Fi-aou ! Fi-aou !"

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THE TALE OF LINGO THE GOND.

THE story was told me by Lingo Gond, and I cannot vouch for its veracity. This much I do know, that Lingo had completely disappeared from the garden for five days, and no trace of him could be found anywhere; and that at the end of that time, I found him in an old nursery at the edge of the jungle in a state of collapse.

I had him removed to the hospital, where he lay ill for many days, and I thought he was going to die. He developed a very high temperature, and in his ravings was constantly talking about a White Tiger and devils and ghosts.

When he got better he told me the yarn, and I could see that he placed implicit belief in it himself. Often, while narrating it, he would shudder and shiver, and his eyes would bulge out of his head in utter terror.

Before I go any further I will describe Lingo. If the reader will imagine to himself a stunted gorilla with its tail cut off, and the hair on its body shaved, and to this add a pair of cross eyes and bow legs, he will get some idea of Lingo's appearance. The only redeemable part about him was his smile. When he smiled and showed a perfect set of milk-white teeth, you, somehow, forgot his hideousness and however angry you might have been with him, you had to forgive him.

He was also a very good Shikari, and on that account I soon added him to my list of bungalow servants. He knew the haunt of every wild animal in the jungle within

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a radius of ten miles, and his woodcraft was simply wonderful. He could track things for miles, when to my uninitiated eye there was not a single mark to show which way they had gone.

My guns were his greatest pride and he fondled them as if they were his children. He used actually to talk to them and tell them episodes of his hunting days in his country, generally finishing up with "and now if I had had the like of you then, the village would never have been in want of venison to eat, nor the tigers and leopards in the Seoni jungles for a man to shoot them."

The morning preceding his disappearance, he had not turned up at the bungalow to work, but had sent his wife to tell me that he was suffering from an attack of malaria.

At three o'clock in the afternoon he had gone! No one had seen him go away or could tell me anything about him. He had simply vanished, and though I had sent men all over the place to look for him he could not be found. I even sent a search party into the jungle, but they came back unsuccessful, and at last I gave him up as lost, thinking that some wild animal had killed him.

When I found him at last, in the old nursery, he did not have any marks of violence on him. His skin had been torn here and there by thorns, and he had a cut on his leg which might have been caused by a sharp piece of bamboo piercing the flesh while he was wandering about the jungle; otherwise, his state of collapse, and the look of utter terror in his eyes were the only signs to show that he had had a rough time of it.

"The Sahib knows that the day I disappeared I was suffering from an attack of fever," he said. "Well, after

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my wife had gone out to the garden to pluck, I lay down and fell asleep. I woke up about one o'clock in the afternoon feeling very bad, so thought perhaps if I had a little drop of liquor I would feel better. I drank the liquor, a mere cupful and lay down again and went to sleep. And then, Huzoor, I remember no more till I woke to find myself far in the jungle, with my bow and arrow in my hand. How I got there I do not know, but before long I saw a beautiful White Tiger not far from me. Its skin was as white as milk, and the black markings on its body stood out so prominently that it was the most perfect beast I have ever seen anywhere. And the Huzoor knows that I have seen hundreds of tigers and leopards, both here in Assam and in the jungles around Seoni.

I debated in my mind whether I should follow it and find out its haunts, or whether I should return to my house, as it was getting dark, and it would be an hour at least before the moon would appear, but I thought to myself if I could find out the haunts of the beast and take you khabbar about it you would be very pleased, for to kill such an animal as a White Tiger, would make you, Sahib, a king among Shikaris, to say nothing of the backsis I would be given.

Accordingly, Huzoor, I crept after it. There was something about that tiger which I neither liked nor understood. For instance, it let me come up within twenty paces of it, knowing, for I am certain it saw me and knew that I was following it, that I was there. And yet it did not once turn round to try and frighten me away, or even try to get away from me, which it had ample opportunity of doing any moment it liked. Now I have

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followed tigers and leopards often in the jungle, and know that the very moment they even suspect that someone is about, they bound away into the undergrowth and hide, unless of course it happens to be a tiger or leopard out with its cubs, in which case they attack straightaway.

As far as I could see on this occasion the tiger seemed to be anxious for me to follow him. In fact, when I stopped, he would stop too and have a look round at me to see what I was doing. Then he would walk on a few yards and turn round to see if I were following, and if I was not he would stop again, so that he would always be within sight of me. Now I thought this behaviour very strange indeed, but eventually put it down to the fact that it might be some special jāt of tiger I knew nothing at all about, and so after a few minutes I decided to keep on after it.

We went on, the tiger leading, and I about twenty paces behind it, and we must have gone several miles into the jungle. The path here took a turn to the right, and soon I found myself walking down the banks of a river, none other than our Putinadi, Huzoor. The moon had risen now, and it was as bright as day, and when the tiger stopped in the middle of the stream to have a drink, I could only stare in wonderment at its beautiful form, and longed to have one of the Huzoor's guns in my hand so that I could shoot it. However, after quenching its thirst it moved on, and I followed. We were coming to a part of country I did not like, the place where the coolies bury the women who die in childbirth, and I had a feeling that it would be best to leave the tiger and go home. But, Huzoor, I could not, and simply had to follow it, it had fascinated me so. Soon I found myself in an open

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space, and could see the forms of beds and biers, and I knew at last that I was actually in the burial place of the Churkin. I now became greatly alarmed, Huzoor, especially so when the tiger lifted its head in the air and roared.

There was a chuckle of women's voices, but just then, a jungle cock, mistaking the bright moonlight for dawn, crowed, and the spell was broken, for the chuckling voices I had heard, Huzoor, were none other then those of the Churkin, the women who die in childbirth, and haunt the jungle around the places they are buried, tormenting any male who happens to fall into their hands ; and the crow of the jungle cock is the only protection that Bhagavan has given us against them.

The tiger now seemed to become furious and let out roar after roar. From afar it was answered by another tiger, and then it moved off. I also followed like one impelled. On we went, Huzoor, over hills and dales for a day and a night, and we must have travelled many miles. We passed a herd of wild elephants and several bears, to say nothing of the hundreds of jungle fowl and pheasants we put up, and once the tiger was charged by a wild sow with young. They fought it out there, and I was a spectator of that terrible battle. The jungle rang with the noise of that fight for over an hour, and for a long time the odds against them seemed equal. At last however, the tiger by a mighty piece of scheming managed to get a grip on the wild sow's neck, and within a minute she was lying on the ground dead. It then killed both the young pigs and ate them. On it went again, stopping every now and then to lick its wounds, and on I followed. A madness seemed to have taken possession of me, for

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I remember that the only object I seemed to have in life just then was to keep that tiger in view.

Like this another day passed and then I felt myself getting weaker and weaker, for I had not tasted any food for a long time, Huzoor. Night was coming on now, and the country seemed to me to be getting familiar once more, and I found myself on the banks of the Putinadi for the second time. There was a break in the high jungle just there, and through it I could see the tops of the shade trees among the tea, and I knew that I could not be very far away from the garden. Suddenly the tiger let out an unearthly roar, and almost immediately at least forty nude women each carrying a small child on its hip leapt out of the jungle and surrounded me—the Churkin had got a hold of me, Huzoor!

I was now terrified, for among them I could make out the faces of several of them. Jitni was there, Sombari, Pano, Tulsi, Kondhia's wife, Kantho, Ughni, Kirtha and several others whom the Huzoor knows died in childbirth; two of them, Kantho and Ughni, only within the last two months. Others I could not recognize, they must have been women who died before I came to the garden.

Their long hair was flowing down their backs, and whenever they spoke, flames shot out of their mouths. I was nearly mad with terror, Huzoor, and then they set on me with sticks and whips made out of branches of trees and creepers and thrashed me unmercifully. Just before I lost consciousness, they started to dance around me laying on at me, all the time. I knew nothing more, till I woke to find myself in the hospital. They tell me the Huzoor found me in an old nursery at the back of the Bamboo Bari. If this is so, I do not know how I got there,

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for the last time I had my senses about me I was on the opposite bank of the river surrounded by Churkin who were thrashing the life out of me. What became of the White Tiger I do not know, but Huzoor, I pray you, if ever you come across a White Tiger, do not follow it. It is not a Tiger at all but a devil in the form of one who decoys men for the women who died in childbirth to ill-treat."

I was rather amused at this yarn, and put it down to Lingo getting delirious with fever and wandering into the jungle where he imagined both the Tiger and the ghosts and all the events connected with them.

The sequel to this, however, happened three days later. Forbes, the man on the neighbouring garden, bagged a magnificent albino tiger, which answered exactly to the description given me of it by Lingo, even to the fact of the wounds on its body, which Lingo had told me it had got in its encounter with the wild sow, and I cursed myself for a senseless idiot for not taking more notice of the yarn and searching for the beast.

Poor old Lingo the Gond, he is dead now, a leopard got him in the jungle one day when she was taking her cubs out for an airing, and had come upon him suddenly. I miss his misshapen, ugly form about the bungalow, and the many days and nights of good shikar he was instrumental in getting me. Whenever I sit over a kill at night his face somehow seems to come before me and I think of that smile of his, and the courage he showed on many of our shooting excursions. And if ghosts and spirits were believed in implicitly by him, and feared more even than a wounded and charging tiger, who can blame him ? for he was only living up to what he had been taught to believe from the time he could crawl.

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I can testify to his wonderful pluck and bravery in the jungle on many occasions, when it was only by keeping an iron grip on myself that I did not allow terror to take a hold of me and disgrace myself for evermore.

He met his death just as he would have wished, with his faithful bow in his hand, and his arrow buried in the neck of his slayer. I hope that his soul is untroubled by Churkin and Bhoots and folk of that ilk in the land beyond the vale.

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THE CLUMP OF BAMBOOS.

WHEN I was at Nardhubi, I was constantly having trouble with an old clump of bamboos that stood at the end of the Cooly lines. The outside bamboos in the clump would break off at their base and fall across the road which ran alongside, blocking it up. At last I decided to have it cut out, and calling old Ramoo Sirdar to me one day, I told him to put some men on with axes to do the job.

Instead of going away at once and getting the people, as he usually did when he got an order from me, he stood there looking at the bamboos, and then at me, in a curious sort of a way. "Well Booda," I said to him, "what's the matter? Why don't you go and do as I tell you!" "If the Huzoor will pardon me," he replied, "it would be better not to destroy this clump of bamboos for it is believed to be sacred." "Oh rubbish!" said I (for I had a bit of liver that day), "every time I want to cut down a tree or a clump of bamboos somebody tells me it is sacred, and shouldn't be touched."

"If the Huzoor will listen to me, I will tell him the story of this clump of bamboos, which was told to me by an old Fakir many years ago, when I first came here, and if it then pleases the Sahib to do it, it will not be my fault if anything should happen." "Go on," I replied, and he started. "Long ago, Huzoor, in the time of the Assam Kings, they say a village stood on the site where this Tea Garden now is. In that village there lived a holy

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Brahmin, who spent his time in fasting and prayer, and in working miracles among the people. Soon he became famous for his good works, and the news of the miracles he worked spread far and wide, till they got to the ears of Tarabai, the wife of the then ruling King of Assam. Now Tarabai was an unhappy woman, for although she had offered sacrifices at various shrines, and had had several temples built, yet the desire of her heart, to have a son, was denied her. When the news of the miracles worked by the Brahmin came to her ears, she sent a messenger post haste to the village, with offerings begging the holy man to intercede for her to the Goddess Bhowani to grant her a son.

"Her messenger on his arrival at the village sought out the Brahmin, and laying the offerings of gold and silk, and other precious things at his feet, told him his mistress's request. The Brahmin would not accept the offerings. 'For,' he said, 'what do I, an old man, whose life is spent in penance and austerities, want with these worldly goods? A little parched rice, and a drink of water is all I need to keep life in me, and I covet not the riches of the world; but as your mistress has faith in my powers, which the Goddess Bhowani has granted me, tell her that her wish will be gratified, and that a son will be born to her within a year. And in order to give you a sign of assurance to take back to her, I will perform a sacrifice now, and the sign will be given to you.'

"With this he sent for a young goat, and taking it with him, he came to the place where we now stand, Huzoor. Here he heaped up the earth in seven small mounds, forming a circle, and in the centre of this he stood with the goat. Saying the sacred words and making

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the sacred signs, he cut the throat of the goat, and holding its head back, he allowed the blood from it to pour down into the centre of the circle, and again saying some sacred words, he made a sign, and lo, three young bamboo shoots shot up from the earth in front of his astonished beholders. These he blessed with the words, 'The blessing of Bhowani be on thee, thou shalt be a sign of plenty, for as long as thou shalt stand the country round thee shall be fertile, and the people shall prosper.'

"The messenger went back and reported what he had seen and heard to the Queen, who was overjoyed, and within a year a son was born to her.

"After living to a great old age, the Brahmin died at Gauhati, where he had gone on a pilgrimage. The village prospered too, and great care was taken of the bamboos, which soon grew into a fine thick clump.

"Several years passed, Huzoor, and then suddenly, for no visible reason, the clump of bamboos started withering away and dying. Every year new shoots used to burst up from the ground to take the place of the bamboos that had dried up, but this particular year they say no new shoots appeared.

"The people grew concerned, for they remembered the prophecy, 'As long as thou shalt stand the country around shall be fertile, and the people shall prosper,' and they did all in their power to prevent the bamboos from dying out but it was of no avail, and within a short time only a few rotten stumps showed where the clump once stood.

"Then ill luck visited the village. Rain was scarce, the crops were a failure, and a disease broke out among the cattle which carried them off by tens and twenties

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a day. And *this* was not all. That year the Burmese invaded Assam, burnt the village to the ground, and massacred its inhabitants.

"The site of the village was soon over-grown with jungle, and remained in that state for many years till this Tea Garden was opened out on it; but it is believed that the year after the trouble came to the village, new shoots burst out once again from the earth, and soon a new clump of bamboos grew up in place of the one that had died out.

"And this, Huzoor, is the clump of bamboos of which I am speaking. That is why I pray the Huzoor not to destroy it, for if he does, this Kooti will never prosper. A great calamity will fall on it, as it did on the village the year the bamboos died out, and who knows we may be destroyed even as the village and its inhabitants were, so I pray the Huzoor to grant my request and spare the bamboos."

I laughed. "All right," I said, "have it your own way, the bamboos shall stand."

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LALLSAI.

"O LALLSAI! thy wicked imp of a son is a thief. Did I not catch the son of a shameless mother only a few minutes gone, stealing one of my best fowls, and when he saw me he dashed its head on the ground, and hid it in yonder drain. Here is my lovely fowl killed by thy shameless son, hai, hai, he has learnt evil ways soon."

These words addressed by Niroda (a next door neighbour in the lines) to Lallsai one evening put him into a terrible temper, for was not little Kalu the apple of his eye, and his only son?

Turning on the woman he abused her; "O thou wife of a hundred husbands! thou daughter of a shameless mother! and an ill-born father! thou liest. What would my son, my little Kalu do with stealing thy fowl, thou woman of the caste of pigs, whose husband is even like unto the swine in the lines."

Hearing his wife abused, Niroda's husband came out, and soon there was a big marpît. The line chowkidars, as soon as they could restore order, brought both parties before the Manager that evening, and after enquiries being made, it was found that the woman Niroda's accusation was correct, and that Lallsai's son, Kalu, had stolen her fowl. When Lallsai was convinced, he promptly offered to pay for it, and on the money being handed over to the woman, the matter was thought to be closed.

But as things turned out it was not so. The next day Lallsai was reported as being absent from the lines, and

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as no trace of him was found for another two days, chowkidars were sent to search for him. His wife reported that he had taken the matter of his son stealing the fowl terribly to heart, and had threatened to put an end to himself, but as this was only thought to be the wild talk of a man in a temper she had taken no notice of him.

Four days later, while the women were plucking a section in the garden, not far from Lallsai's house, I heard a few women scream, and saw them run away. I went to find out what the trouble was, and was told that a man was hanging from a small Mango tree that happened to be growing near the edge of a big drain, in the tea. On going up to it, I found the man to be Lallsai. He had hanged himself with his Dhoti!

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THE BOR MOHIRI.

THE funny man of the district nicknamed him "Dirty Berty" because of the fact that he never cleaned his teeth, nor brushed his hair, and was always seen in a grimy coat which he only changed once in three months, simply because it nearly fell off him.

When I was transferred to Redoo, after I had had a look round the place I got hold of him and asked him about the Labour force. "Sir," he said to me, "the coolies on this Tea Garden, swine-like fellows and fellowesses, making the plenty golmal, and shirking the plenty work. Your honour will have to rule with the iron-like glove." Soon I got to know him better and found him a most interesting fellow indeed. He was a tremendous talker, and it took me all my time to answer the questions he was continually asking me. He spoke of Shaketh-the-spears plays, of Astronomy, the War, Religion, Agriculture, and a host of other subjects. Once he even suggested that I should get him books on "Latin and French-like languages," for, said he, "I am desirous of learning a language in which I can speak to your honour about anything private about the garden. These cooly fellows, your honour, are getting very proudy, and all understanding the plenty English these advancing days, and nothing is private from their long-like ears now." I told him I did not know French and that my Latin was so rusty that I would not be able to converse in it if I tried, so that ended the matter.

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He was very interested in animals of other countries which he had not seen. Whenever the talk about animals came up he would ask me about Lions and Kangaroos, and Ostriches. Once a travelling circus came to the place. Among the wild beasts on show was a fine African Lion. " Dirty Berty " was overjoyed. At last he would be able to see that " stupendous and famous animal." That evening I got the following letter from him :—

" Honoured Sir,

Hearing that there is one lion come with this circus that is here now, may it please your honour to grant me leave to go and see that fierce and fiery animal ? I *may* be back to-night by the favour of God, your honour, and the bellicose animal mildly behaving."

One of the Hazira Mohiris on the garden had been playing the fool in his work and had to be dismissed. " Dirty Berty " sent Khabbar to a relative of his about it, telling him to apply for the job. The same afternoon the man arrived, and when I saw him I asked him who he was. " Candidate," he replied. I then asked him if he had ever worked on a Tea Garden before. " No," he replied, " but I am anxious to learn about Tea." I told him to put in his application in his own handwriting to me, and the following letter was brought to me the same night. " Dirty Berty " and he had composed it together.

" Most Honoured Sir,

Hearing there is one hand wanted on your honour's garden, I beg to offer you my hand. As to my adjustments I appeared for the Matriculation Examination at Jorhat, and failed owing to the climatic conditions of the ice-like weathers making my fingers disobedient to my

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fond wishes, thus making my writing illegible. Further, I had received a great shock to my mental system in the shape of the death of my only fond brother. Besides, most Honoured Sir, I beg to state that I am in very uncomfortable circumstances, being the soul means of support of my fond brother's seven issues, consisting of three adults and four adultresses, the latter being the bain of my existence owing to my having to support two of my own wives as well as their issues, of which by God's misfortune the feminine gender predominates. If by wonderful good fortune, these few humble lines meet with your benign kindness and favourable turn of mind, I the poor menial shall ever pray for the long life and prosperity of yourself as well as your Honour's pothumous Olive branches.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your most poor menial,
Suresh Chandra."

Needless to say, for the sake of the "three adults, and four adultresses," and the prayer for my "pothumous Olive branches," the man got the job, and turned out quite a smart fellow.

On one occasion, when I had some Nagas cutting jungle for me, I put "Dirty Berty" on to measure up the land done by them. Evidently the Naga Ticcadar and he had a difference of opinion about the measurement of a certain plot, with the result that they both lost their tempers, and started abusing one another. Neither of them would give in, and luckily I happened to arrive there just when things were getting serious, for the Naga Ticcadar was just about to go for "Dirty Berty" with

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a dao, when he saw me and stopped. "What's the matter Bor Mohiri?" I said, "What's all the trouble about?" "Sir," he replied, "this swine-like Naga Ticcadar fellow, he trying to commit damn swindling-like operation, and because I telling him if he cheat I breaking his ape-like features and making him grovel on the floor, like the microbes in the dust, he threatening to cut me up with his dao. I pray your honour to kick him in posterior places, so that he may learn he is in civilized place, and not among the savage hill-top dwelling of his ancient fathers." "Oh you can't do that you know" I said, "for after all these people are only half civilized, and they would as soon cut your head off as look at you, if you were to strike them. You must be careful and not go too far with them." Then turning on the Naga Ticcadar I gave him a sound rating, and settled the matter by measuring up the land myself.

On another occasion he was talking to me about the leeches in a certain section of Tea being very troublesome. "Sir," he said, "that funny section of Tea plentiful with that voracious and suctuous animal the leech. He climbing on to feet and calf and leg and damnably sucking the blood from the body till his belly swelling like one big fat potato, and then he dropping off on to floor, and hiding there till the fellow's interior organs, wishing to partake of more grub, when he starts off scoffing again. He is a greatly gluttonous creature."

Just then I happened to pull out my watch, and seeing that it was after one o'clock, I got on my pony, and started to get back to the bungalow. Lifting his hand to his forehead, "Good afternoon time, your honour," he said, "I must also trot to my dwelling and partake on

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some grub, for like that always eating creature, the leech, my belly also plenty calling loudly for emptiness, and by the favour of God and your honour, I will go and satisfy the fellow."

"Good afternoon," I replied, and rode away.

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CHANDMONI.

THE girl was out gathering firewood. She was singing to herself little snatches of songs she had learned in her home country, her thoughts being on that far away land, and the days of her childhood spent in a little village near Dumka, where her uncle was the village headman. She could just remember the day when the recruiting Sirdar had arrived at the village from the tea garden, dressed in fine clothes with plenty of money to spend, and an air of superiority about him. And the tales he had told them of the gardens in Assam where money could be had for the asking ; with very little work to do, and plenty of time for leisure and play.

She remembered the talk of the village folk. "Truly," they had said, "this must be a fine country indeed, and have we not the proof of it here, for behold this Sirdar dressed in finery with money in his pockets, walking about like a Maharaja. It would be well if some of our people went to this wonderful land, where people grow rich within a few years." And then her father had decided to go.

Hard times those were indeed in the village for the rains had been a failure that year and black famine would soon be staring them in the face. She remembered it all now. The Depôt where they had stayed for four days, and then the journey in the Fire Carriage. How terrified she was when she had seen the big thundering monster, belching forth fire and smoke, come tearing into the little station, and how she had howled and clung

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on to her mother's knees with fear. And then their arrival on the garden where they had found that things were not just what they had been given to understand they would be, where people had to work, and work hard for their pay.

Those days seemed far away now. She felt an aching at her heart to see that dear little village just then, and to meet the old friends she had played with in her childhood days.

And then she thought of her husband, the unnameable one, of her marriage a few months ago. She was fortunate indeed for he was a good man, hardworking, and kind to her, and from all she had heard from the other girls in the garden, he would be a Sirdar in charge of a gang of coolies soon, and she would then be known as the Sirdarin, and be the envy of the other girls.

Thus she kept on her mind in a reverie, and she was unconscious of the fact that she had strayed further into the jungle than she had meant to. When she had gathered sufficient firewood she cut some creepers that happened to be growing near by, and using them as a string she tied the wood into a bundle and lifting it on her head, she started on her homeward journey.

And then she suddenly realised where she was, and she grew terrified. She seemed to imagine all sorts of wild animals and devils, bent on her destruction, hiding in the jungle, just waiting for an opportunity to pounce on her, and throwing down the firewood, she fled, casting furtive glances behind her to see if she were being followed. Suddenly she tripped over something, and fell headlong on the ground. She let out one long piercing scream and then fainted.

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It was fortunate for her that she had screamed, for her husband on his return to the lines from work, not finding her there, had made enquiries about her from his mother, and had been told that she had gone to the jungle to gather firewood two hours ago, but had not returned yet. Getting anxious, he set out to look for her. He had just arrived near the edge of the jungle when he heard her scream, and running as fast as he could in the direction of the sound, he found his wife lying on the ground to all appearances dead, with a huge Python curled round and round her, crushing the life out of her.

Acting promptly he took out his dao from a little wooden scabbard he had attached to his waist with a string, and severed the Python's head from its body. And then further cutting it in halves, he released his wife from its toils, and lifting her up he carried her to a little stream near by where he sprinkled water on her face and head.

She soon opened her eyes, and gave vent to a fit of weeping, and trembling, and the boy's heart began to beat freely once again. He spoke to her caressingly, telling her not to be afraid for he was near her, and no more harm would come to her. He had killed the wicked snake he said, that had brought this evil on her, as he would everything that would try to harm his little wife. Soon his words had a soothing effect, and as soon as she was calmer, he lifted her on to his back and carried her to his house in the lines.

Here with tender care and nursing, the girl was soon well again. The boy was overjoyed. He had feared for the life of his Moonface, but now, the gods be praised,

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she was out of all danger. Truly he must give the gods a sacrifice for sparing her life.

Some months later, his wife gave birth to a bonny little boy. The Doctor Babu on the Garden, reporting its birth to the Manager, wrote as follows :—" The woman Chandmoni giving birth to a male child last night, having some growths on its back same like one serpentine-like animal." And so it was. In the centre of its back was a birth-mark exactly resembling a snake.

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JENKINS.

JENKINS, the Manager of Situlgoori, was a very quiet man. On the few occasions when he had been seen anywhere he had hardly been known to talk at all beyond answering the few questions put to him. His garden was away at the foot of the hills 30 miles from nowhere, and yet he was quite contented. His ideal of life was a Tea garden, such as he was on, with no one worrying him with visits, and plenty of time to work in.

The garden and the coolies were his fetishes, and he was never so happy as when he was surrounded by coolies, talking to them, and asking them questions. He had refused his Home-leave several times, but at last the Agents had put their foot down, and made him go home. If anyone had said that Jenkins would have got married, when he went home, they would have been called a liar! Nevertheless, the unexpected did happen. Brown, his nearest neighbour in Assam, got a letter from him saying he was married, and was bringing his wife out shortly.

When Brown took the news to the Club, he was laughed at. People asked him if he were trying to "pull their leg," and the only way he could make them believe it, was by showing them Jenkin's letter. Anyway, when the people of the District at last had to believe it, they decided at a meeting at the Club that they would give the Jenkins a wedding present, and go and meet them at the station on their arrival in Assam.

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At last the great day came, and the six members of the District all came down to the station to meet the newly married couple. Speculation was rife as to the sort of person his wife would be. One suggested a prim old maid, another a quiet unassuming girl with hardly a word for herself. What was their surprise, however, when the train came in to find a pretty girl bubbling over with happiness and merriment, being introduced to them as Mrs. Jenkins. They nearly all fell down with amazement, for she was the very last sort of a person they dreamed of, as being the wife of a man like Jenkins.

The days wore on, and the boys one after another had called on them. On two occasions Jenkins had brought his wife to the Club, but beyond that she had been seen nowhere.

Then one day Brown got a letter, "Come over at once if you can. I'm in great trouble. My wife is dead." Brown was shocked. Only three and a half months before they had welcomed her a bride in the District, and now she was dead. Brown sent out his daks, and rode as hard as his ponies could go. He arrived there to find Jenkins on the verandah waiting for him. Brown sympathized. Jenkins' nerves were all on edge. "Come in and see her, Brown," he said. They walked into the bedroom together. Mrs. Jenkins lay there with a smile on her face, and a hole in her head. Her hand was still gripping on to a tiny lady's pistol. Brown was shocked—horrified. Presently, "Good God, Jenkins," he said, "whatever made her do it?" "God knows, Brown," the latter replied. "I was out on Kamjari when the bearer rushed to me and told me my wife had committed suicide."

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And then they found the letter below her pillow, "She had been miserable," she wrote, "from the day she had arrived. The dullness and loneliness had got on her nerves. She had been used to a gay life at home with plenty of amusement and fun. The dullness had driven her mad. She couldn't stand it. She begged her husband to forgive her, but death was sweeter than the miserable existence she had had since she arrived." There was nothing more.

Brown and Jenkins together made the coffin, and they buried her in the garden near some Nohour Trees the same evening.

Jenkins is still in the District but nobody ever sees him out anywhere. Brown goes to see him once a week, but he can never get him to talk. His mind seems to be far away.

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THE MAN-EATER OF KHAGRIJAN.

THE four men were sitting at the fireplace talking. It was Pagget's "night" and they had come across, some on ponies and some in trolleys, to partake of Pagget's dinner and drink his special brand of whisky—the real Mackay. Pagget, their host, was pottering around the room attending to details and getting things ready. At last when he had finished he joined them, "Well boys," he said, "what's all the news? I feel as if I haven't seen anyone for months." The next few minutes passed in relating all the news of the District.

They spoke of Polo and Ponies, subjects dear to all of them, of Tea, the state of the market, and the prices they were getting. Then at last the conversation turned round to Shikar. One of their number, Renshaw, was a noted Shikari and had accounted for a great deal of big game. He was a very reserved man, however, and could seldom be got to relate his experiences. But this night for some reason or the other—perhaps Pagget's superlative whisky—he seemed to be in a talkative mood, and asked them if they would like to hear the story of the Man-eater of Khagrijan. Naturally they all assented and, after their glasses were re-filled, Renshaw started.

"When I first went to Khagrijan," he said, "there used to be a man-eating tiger knocking about the place, which was playing up old Harry all around. Things got so bad that it was a hard job to get the coolies out to work

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at all, for on two separate occasions the tiger had walked into a section of tea, while the women were plucking there, and had gone off with one of them. When I was told about this, I just made up my mind to get the brute at any cost. I tried all sorts of stunts for this purpose, but like all man-eaters he was as cunning as the very devil himself, and none of them came off. For three days the coolies simply would not turn out to work, but at last after a lot of persuasion I succeeded in getting them out on condition that I would stay with them all the time, armed with a gun. This I did, and as well I got a batch of twelve men armed with spears and axes to go around the edge of the section where the women were plucking, making an infernal din with empty kerosene oil tins; for a few days everything went off very well, and nothing was seen of the tiger.

Just as everyone was gaining confidence again, one morning the tiger got the better of us and upset all my plans. The men were out as usual with their empty kerosene oil tins and I with my gun, and the women were all plucking away and laughing and joking, as if such a thing as a man-eater was unheard of on the garden; but all of a sudden from one end of the section, about forty yards away from where the rest of the women were plucking, I heard a terrible scream and a growl and saw the brute of a man-eater getting away into the jungle dragging a woman along with him. The silly woman, I found later, had left her basket a good way behind, and had gone back to put the leaf she had plucked into it, when the tiger which had evidently been skulking around, waiting for such an opportunity, pounced on her and took her away.

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Of course, as soon as I saw the brute getting off with the woman, I followed it immediately into the jungle, but though I stayed there till it was nearly dark, looking for it, not a sign or a trace of it did I see. I came back to the bungalow horribly "fed up," and found the Babus and Sirdars, with the husband of the unfortunate woman who had been taken away, waiting for me there. They told me as soon as I had gone after the tiger, the coolies had got terrified and run back to the lines; they said that nothing would ever induce them to go out to work again until the tiger had been killed.

Naturally this put me in a terrible fix, for it was in the middle of June and it meant that all the leaf on the bushes would spoil for want of plucking and, as far as work was concerned, that everything would be at a standstill till I could rid the garden of the pest. I wrote to the Agents telling them the state of affairs, but added that I would try my very best to get things normal again by shooting the tiger.

I spent the next week in courting death, and incidentally the tiger. I used to go out with my gun all hours of the day to his favourite haunts, and would shout and sing to let him know I was there but not a sign of him did I see, though I felt sure he was stalking me all the time, and just waiting for an opportunity to catch me unprepared, when he would jump at me to finish me off.

Then, on the eighth day, I got another surprise. Finding that he couldn't get anyone to kill on the garden, since the coolies had stopped going out to work, he got bolder and started haunting the lines; and this night

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an old man who had come out of his house and was sitting down near his door was carried off.

Naturally this made the coolies still more terrified, and someone gave out that it was the spirit of an old man named Karamsing, who had died a year before, come in the form of a tiger to take vengeance on all those whom he disliked when he was alive. To give colour to this yarn, they told me that the old man who was taken off by the tiger had had a quarrel with Karamsing's widow a few days before, and that the woman had been heard to say "Be careful, don't abuse me or I will make a Puja to the tiger and get it to take you away." The coolies were just raving, and it was all I could do to prevent them from tearing Karamsing's widow to pieces. Anyway I settled the matter by getting the woman shifted to a house in the lines not far from the bungalow, and made a chowkidar responsible for her safety.

But to say the least of it, it was rather an uncomfortable situation and things were looking pretty black. Something had to be done and done quickly, or I would lose all my coolies, for they told me straight that if anyone else were killed by the tiger they would run away.

I was just about at the end of my tether then. I had tried everything I could think of, even to courting death from the brute by going out all alone after it, but without any success at all. Two days later, however, while I was sitting on my verandah just as it was getting dark, I saw the tiger in the Tea about thirty yards away from the bungalow. "Ho, ho, my beauty," I said to myself, "I'm the game you're after this time, am I? Well, good luck to you if you succeed." I got up quietly, and went into my bed-room for my gun, but by the time I

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got back again he had disappeared. I could find no trace of him though I searched for quite a long time. I warned all the servants to be careful, and sat up quite late that night but still saw nothing of him.

The next two evenings, however, I saw him again in the Tea from the verandah. He was evidently determined to have a go at me, and I was rather pleased that he was, for it would give me a chance of having a shot at him. I didn't fire at him on these occasions as he was too far away, and I did not like to shoot until I was certain of hitting him.

The next day I had a fellow named Rushton staying with me, and when I told him about the tiger he was all over sitting up with me that evening. Just as it was getting dusk we got on the verandah and waited there. As Rushton hadn't brought his gun I gave him the only other gun in the place—my volunteer rifle. In bringing it out, it so happened that I brought the bayonet which was fixed to it at the time out as well, but as I did not expect it would be needed, I took it off and put it on the table near by.

Anyway we sat there till 8 o'clock but not a sign of the tiger did we see. We then went in and had dinner, and when we had finished, came out on the verandah again. The time went on, the clock in the bungalow struck ten, and then I don't know what happened but I suspect we dozed off on our chairs. The next thing I can remember was feeling a terrible pain in my shoulder, and finding myself being carried away by the tiger ; then I fainted.

It seemed to me to be a long time before I came to *consciousness* but I suddenly felt the pain in my shoulder again, and could faintly hear Rushton's voice saying

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"Don't move Renshaw, try to drink this if you can, like a good fellow. You will be all right in a jiffy now." I opened my eyes, and saw Rushton bending over me, with a glass of raw whisky in his hand and the bearer holding a lantern up above me. I then turned my head aside and could faintly make out the form of a dead tiger stretched out a few feet away from me. "The tiger, you got it?" I managed to gasp out and heard him reply "yes," and then I fainted again.

I don't remember anything further till about 11 o'clock the next morning, when I awoke to find the Doctor standing over my bed swabbing my wounds with pure Iodine. "What's the matter, Doc," I said, "what are you trying to do to me?" "Don't upset yourself, Renshaw," he replied in his most professional manner, which made me see at once that there was something very serious the matter with me. "That damn tiger got you last night, but we'll have you right in a few days." However, blood poisoning set in and they thought it was all up with me; but my strong constitution pulled me through and a month later I was convalescent.

As soon as I could, I got Rushton to tell me about it. "I suppose you remember the clock striking ten that night, Renshaw," he said. I nodded. "Well so do I. After that you and I must have dozed in our chairs. I was awakened suddenly by hearing a growl quite close to me, and the next thing was I saw the brute of a tiger slinking off and dragging you along with it. As you know it was a bright moonlight night, but I would not dare to fire for fear of hitting you, so I got hold of the bayonet you had left lying on the table and fixing it on the rifle I chased after the tiger. Thank God! you are

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a very heavy man, for the mangy old brute seemed to have some difficulty in carrying you away and dropped you twice before getting off with you. However, I chased after him as hard as I could and came up to him about two hundred yards away from the bungalow. When he saw me near him, of course he dropped you immediately and came for me, but before he had time to get around properly I lunged at him with my gun, and as luck would have it struck him right through the heart with the bayonet. He rolled over on the ground and the bayonet snapped in two, but it had done its work, and the Man-eater of Khagrijan was no more. To make sure that he was properly dead I fired a shot into his brain, and when I found that it was all up with him, I got some whisky from the bungalow, and washed your wounds with it. The rest, of course, you know."

Opening his coat and shirt Renshaw showed the four men the scars on his arm and shoulder. "That, boys, is how the Man-eater of Khagrijan came to his end," he said, "and if it were not for Rushton's bravery, I would not be here to tell the tale."

"Needless to say," he continued, "the coolies were overjoyed when they heard their enemy had been slain, and they offered sacrifices to the gods for ridding them of a terrible scourge. In a few days they turned out to work and soon all about it was forgotten, and everything went on as usual."

The Bearer came into the room "Khana taiyar hai, Huzoor," he announced, and getting up they went in to dinner.

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THE VENGEANCE OF KALI.

GOING round the garden one day I happened to notice a small plot of land in a section of tea which had no bushes growing in it. It seemed rather strange that just this small patch in the centre of the section should be left unplanted, so I got hold of the Bor Mohiri,(1) and asked him the reason of it.

"Your honour means that square patch in No. 1 ?" he said. "Yes, I replied, it seems as if it has intentionally been left unplanted."

"Oh no, your honour," he said, "In the last twenty years since I have been on this garden it has been planted up eight times, but the pulleys(2) never live. There is a tale attached to the place, your honour. They say that in the days of the Assam Kings, a temple dedicated to the Goddess Kali used to stand on that spot. In the temple was an image of the Goddess which had a big hole in its stomach, through which human sacrifices used to be offered to her. Children chiefly were chosen for this purpose, and many a little boy and girl who disappeared from their homes were brought here and sacrificed. Of course when the British Rule in India became stronger, the practice became less and less, and animals took the place of human creatures, though occasionally even then children used to be sacrificed.

"Just before the Burmese invasion of Assam they say the Brahmin in charge of the temple had a dream. The

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(1) Head Babu.
(2) Young tea plants.

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Goddess Kali appeared to him and upbraided him for allowing the practice of human sacrifice to die out.

'For hundreds of years,' she said to him, 'human creatures have been offered me in this temple, and now my votaries have grown luke-warm for my honour, and offer me the blood of animals instead. As a punishment for this the Country shall be overrun by a foreign foe, who shall bring destruction on the land, and sorrow on the people.'

The Brahmin was terrified, especially so when the dream repeated itself three nights in succession, so he sent word about it to Sibsagar to the King, telling him all about his dream, and how the Goddess was offended and threatened punishment unless human sacrifices were offered her. The King on hearing this, sent several prisoners to the Brahmin, who were awaiting sentence of death, and told him to sacrifice them at the temple to propitiate the Goddess. This he did, but that night the Goddess appeared to him in a dream again, and upbraided him still more severely.

'O blasphemous priest,' said she, 'think thou that the blood of the malefactor and the evil one shall be acceptable in my sight? I am grievously offended, and shall only be appeased with the blood of the pure, and this insult can only be wiped out by offering up the first-born son of the King as a sacrifice.'

The Brahmin was now in a terrible state. He knew that if he told the King what the Goddess had told him in his dream about offering up the first-born son of the Royal house as a sacrifice, the King would most probably have him killed as a traitor. On the other hand, the Goddess Kali would undoubtedly take vengeance on the

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Country and on him. In this predicament, he decided on a stratagem to kidnap the young Prince and sacrifice him at the Temple, unknown to anyone.

In order to carry this out successfully, he disguised himself as a Jogi(1) and went to Sibsagar where he preached the cult of the Goddess Kali in the City and villages around. In the evenings as it began to grow dark, he used to go towards the palace, and station himself near the palace gates, where he would loudly sing the praises of the Goddess. This he did several nights in succession, and in this way soon attracted attention, for the King hearing him had him brought to the palace and asked him who he was. 'I am a poor mendicant, O Illustrious One ! whom Kali Mata has chosen as her desciple. Great evil threatens the land, the worship of the Goddess has been allowed to fall into neglect, and she now threatens punishment.'

'But I have sent the malefactors of the State to be offered as a sacrifice on her alter to appease her, and I hoped the Mother would forgive us our late neglect, and look down on us with pleasure again, and bless our people and us,' the King said.

'True, O Illustrious One,' the Jogi replied, 'but the Goddess is offended now because the blood of the malefactor was offered her, for only the blood of the pure and clean of heart are acceptable in her sight.'

Then he expounded the doctrine of the cult of Kali to the King, and remained with him a long time, till at

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(1) A mendicant priest or holy man who travels from place to place begging for alms.

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last the King dismissed him with gifts of money and valuables, promising to help him to spread the religion of the Goddess in the State.

An hour after his departure, the King's son was found to be missing. Search was made everywhere for the young Prince, but nowhere could he be found.

At last suspicion fell in the right direction and taking a number of his courtiers with him, the King rode as fast as possible to the Temple.

Just as they came in sight of it, they saw the Jogi come out of a small patch of jungle leading the Prince by the hand. The party galloped up to them, and immediately the King had the Jogi apprehended, but his joy on finding his son was so great that he was inclined to be merciful, therefore he said, 'I took thee, vile dog, for a holy man. Instead I see before me, him who seeks to destroy my house. Speak dog, lest I despatch thee to the hell, which thou deserveth.'

The Jogi threw himself at the King's feet. 'O Illustrious One, pardon thy slave who seemeth to requite the favours with such evil.' And then taking off his disguise,

'Know, O Lord, thy servant, the Brahmin, priest of the temple of Kali, who only performeth the Mother's will,' he said.

And then he told the King of the dreams in which the Goddess demanded the blood of the first-born of the Royal house to appease her anger for the neglect and disrespect shown her.

'Were one hair on my son's head harmed,' the King said, 'I would slay thee, Brahmin or no Brahmin, but as he is safe and well, I will now forgive thee thy evil

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intention, but I tell thee this, O Brahmin, whether my Country is to be wrested from me or not, I shall not allow the blood of my son to be offered up as a sacrifice to appease the Goddess. Children you may have in plenty, but not my first-born.'

He now ordered the Brahmin to be released, and getting on his horse, he threw him some gold, and started on his journey back to Sibsagar with his son and his followers. The next day he sent a large batch of children to the temple whom the Brahmin sacrificed, but the Goddess would not accept of them, and still demanded only the blood of the Royal child.

The days wore on, your honour, and internal strife broke out in the State. The King's cousin secretly planned to dethrone the King, and raise himself to the throne, and soon two powerful factions were struggling for superiority in the State. And then everything went wrong, for the vengeance of Kali was on the land! They say the King's party being in extremities, appealed to the Burmese for aid, and like an avalanche, they came down into Assam. Everywhere the Assamese were defeated, and temples and shrines were destroyed. A big battle was fought on the site where this garden now stands, your honour, and the Assamese were driven back. The temple of Kali was destroyed, the Brahmin put to death, and all the valuables were looted by the Burmese soldiers.

As usual, jungle soon covered the place where the buildings around the temple stood, but only the site of the temple itself remained bare, for it was sacred to the Goddess. That is the belief, your honour. Whether, it is true or not, I cannot say, but I know that nothing will grow on that spot."

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"An old man in the Busty(1) says," he continued, "that every year when the Kali-puja(2) comes around, the Goddess appears there at night. He saw her once, and was so terrified that he could not speak for many days. The coolies too are afraid to pass the place after dark, your honour, and every Kali-puja they offer sacrifices of goats there to the Goddess, and they say that the next morning nothing remains of the animal sacrificed, perhaps the Goddess comes and takes them away."

"Yes, but perhaps hungry jackals, or some other wild animals do so, too," I suggested.

"Who knows?" he replied. "The Goddess can take unto herself many forms" and smiling he changed the subject to one of work.

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(1) Village.

(2) The festival in honour of the Goddess Kali—the Goddess of Destruction.

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GANESH THE ROGUE.

I WAS out one morning in the jungle with a gang of men having the boundary paths of the garden re-cut. After putting the men on the job, I went on ahead to inspect one of the boundary pillars over which there had been several complaints by the neighbouring Company who had accused us of having taken in some land belonging to them. It was rather difficult country to get over as the path ran across several small marshes and hoolas which still had a fair amount of water in them, and were infested with leeches. Besides, a storm we had had a few weeks before, had played havoc with the bamboos and young trees, knocking them right across the path and blocking it up.

Old Goramanji was with me, hobbling along behind with the aid of a stick. The old man would never admit that he was getting feeble, and would often tax himself far beyond his strength.

I had struck a fairly decent elephant path that ran alongside the boundary, and was walking along it when I saw the old man was in difficulties; so I sat down on the stump of a broken tree, and waited for him to come up and rest awhile.

"Why do you want to come with me, booda," I said, when he came up, "I shall be able to find my way quite easily. You must remember you are not as young and active as you were ten years ago."

"No, Huzoor," he protested, "I am quite all right, and how can I let the Sahib go alone, for he might

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lose his way or some wild animal might attack him, and then there will be no one there to help or save him."

I smiled at the thought of old Goramanji being able to save me, for the old man was so feeble that if anything did happen where it meant a case of moving quickly, it would mean him delaying my chances of getting away, as he could move but slowly, and I should have to stay with him. Still his intentions were good, which was what mattered most.

Poor old Goramanji; he was a type of man, alas! getting so scarce on tea gardens nowadays, who looked up to their masters and obeyed every wish of theirs without thought or question as to the whys and wherefores, ever ready to be of some service to them, without any thought of reward, proud to be faithful to their master's salt they had eaten.

However, I bade him sit down and rest, and he started talking about shikar; he told me various little anecdotes of different Sahibs he had gone out shooting with. How so and so Sahib had shot a wild boar that used to give them a lot of trouble, and destroy their dhan crops and earned the gratitude and blessings of the coolies for ridding them of a pest. How Thomas Sahib, while going around shooting jungly moorghi had quite unexpectedly come across some wild dogs, and was lucky enough to get one, the skin of which he sent to Calcutta to get stuffed. How the fat of a tiger, rubbed in with certain herbs, made a very good liniment and would cure any chest affection.

The conversation went on thus from one subject to another, till it came to a talk about elephants, and I asked

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him if he had ever come across a rogue elephant at any time.

"Oh yes, Huzoor," he said, "there used to be one knocking around this very garden, not many years ago. Did the Huzoor not hear the story of how Tremen Sahib shot it and rid the country of a terrible pest?"

I had heard something about Tremayne shooting a rogue, but did not know the story properly so asked the old man to tell it to me.

"When Tremen Sahib was in charge here, Huzoor," he said, "there was a big tusker hathi roaming about these jungles, doing a lot of damage, both to the villagers' dhan crops, and to the tea.

Now as the Sahib knows, the hathi that goes about alone is a rogue which has been driven out of the herd for ill-temper or some other fault, and is a most dangerous animal to meet, but when that rogue happens to have only one tusk, he is believed to be a reincarnation of the God Ganesha, and is held to be sacred by us.

However, Huzoor, this particular elephant used to roam about at nights, uprooting and trampling down tea bushes, breaking down shade trees, knocking in the sides of drains and in fact doing as much damage as he could in the garden.

Besides this, complaints were constantly being brought to the Sahib by the villagers, about their dhan crops being destroyed, and on several occasions men had been chased by it. Then one day, the Gaon Booda came to the Sahib in a terrible state. His brother, he said, had been killed by the elephant, and he

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begged the Sahib to come out and see the corpse, and if possible to hunt the elephant away.

He would not say to kill it, Huzoor, as of course believing it to be sacred, he would not dare ask for it to be killed for fear of bringing down the curse of the Gods on himself.

The Sahib, however, when he heard what had happened, got his big gun and getting on his pony rode along with the Gaon Booda at his side to see the man who had been killed. When he got there, he found the unfortunate man had been entirely dismembered and squashed to pulp beyond recognition by the elephant. As it was getting late, however, nothing further could be done, so telling them to take away the body and bury it, the Sahib returned home.

The next day, he wired to the Commissioner Sahib telling him what had happened, and asking him to declare the hathi a rogue, for the Huzoor knows that the Sirkar forbids the shooting of elephants unless they have been declared rogues. The Commissioner Sahib wired back telling him he had done so, and that he could shoot the elephant as soon as he liked, and from that day the Sahib always went about with his big elephant gun on the chance of coming across the "one-tusker," and having a shot at it.

But a rogue elephant is a very cunning animal, Huzoor, and after the killing of the man, the sly old creature changed its feeding ground, and went further up the jungle. Several times news was brought in from the districts around, that men had been killed by a one-tusker elephant, and we felt sure it was the same one that had worried us, but as we were left in peace just then, we were

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all very thankful, and after a few weeks we forgot all about it, and even the Sahib stopped bringing his big gun out with him.

Then one evening several weeks later, just as it was getting dark, while the Sahib was sitting out on the verandah of his bungalow reading, he heard a noise as if something was trying to cross a little bridge, which was built over a big drain at the entrance to the compound. He took no notice of it at first, thinking it must be a man or some stray cattle crossing the bridge into the compound, but a little later he heard a tremendous crash as if the bridge had been forcibly broken in, and on looking in the direction of the sound, he saw the outline of a huge elephant against the skyline. But the noise of the bridge breaking down frightened it, and before the Sahib had time to get his gun, it ran away.

It was fortunate that the bridge had given away, Huzoor, for if it had not, and the elephant had been able to get into the compound, there's no knowing what damage it might have done. However, Huzoor, this put the Sahib on his guard, as he suspected it must be the one-tusker come back again on its campaign of mischief, so he started carrying his gun with him again.

A few days later, while the Sahib was out on kamjari, khabbar was brought to him that the elephant had just been seen at the edge of the jungle near No. 4. As soon as he heard this, he galloped off on his pony to the place, followed by me and several of the other Sirdars. Getting off his pony a good distance away from where the elephant was supposed to be, he threw the reins to a man to hold, and went off on foot after it, and I and a few of the bolder Sirdars followed him about 50 paces behind.

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Suddenly we saw the Sahib's gun go up to his shoulder, and looking in the direction it was pointing in, there we saw old Ganesha standing in the shade of some trees, calmly fanning the flies off his body with a branch of a tree. Then we heard the sound of the trigger being pulled, and waited to hear the explosion of the bullet going off, but it did not come, Huzoor.

"Wah! Wah!" said one of the Sirdars to me, "even the bullets of the Sahib-logs are of no avail against it, and refuse to go off, for is not Ganesha a God?" Truly, Huzoor, the same thoughts were in all our minds at the time, but hearing the Sahib say "Damn!" I looked at him and saw him quickly throw out the old bullet, and put a new one into the breech. Ganesha in the mean time, hearing the sound of the trigger being pulled, and the Sahib cursing, immediately stopped fanning himself, and walked out into the open with his trunk raised, and his eyes glistening evilly. We all now ran further back, and hiding behind some trees watched the Sahib from a distance. The Sahib's gun went up to his shoulder again, and just then the elephant took it into his head to charge. We stared in front of us, our eyes glued to the spot, every second expecting to see the Sahib's body being trampled and torn to bits by the elephant; but suddenly, just as it was a few yards away from him, the Sahib fired, and down went the elephant with a crash like a mountain falling, and lay in a heap on the ground.

"Shabash! Shabash!" we shouted, for the Sahib's bravery was superb, Huzoor.

Turning to the Sirdar who had remarked about the bullets of the Sahib-logs being of no avail against Ganesha, I said, "Well, Ramaji, what of the Sahib's bullets now?

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See yonder hathi, though 'tis even a God, laid low. Truly the Sahib-logs are great folk, for they seem to have dominion even over the Gods!" "Yes, brother," he replied very meekly, "'tis even so."

Very soon, Huzoor, the tale spread and Tremen Sahib was looked up to with great awe. The people fully expected that he would be cursed by the Gods for killing Ganesha and many of them were very surprised to see the Sahib still going about with his health and senses about him as they thought that after slaying a sacred hathi, he would wither up and die.

"And what did you think about it, Booda?" I said. "I, Huzoor? why I told them they were very foolish to think our Gods could harm the Sahib-logs, but what do they know about it, Huzoor, poor foolish creatures, if they knew the Sahibs like I know them, they would understand that they are neither afraid of our Gods nor our devils."

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THE SPIRIT OF THE TREES.

"He lived in the Nohour * Trees in the compound, the great grinning fat-paunched ugly devil. Eight hands he had, and a mouth that was forever twitching; and his tongue! Parmeshwar! Was it not of living fire, and did it not emit sparks and flames every time he breathed? Have I seen it? Why, not *once* but two score times, and did he not make the weirdest sounds at me, and call me by my name?

Aye, brothers, he lives there in the Nohour Trees in the compound right enough. The Sahib laughs at me when I tell him this, but did not little Ramoo, Jageshwar's son, die of a flux, because while passing the tree, childlike, he rudely struck it a blow with the dao he had in his hand, and disturbed the creature from its slumber? The child said he felt a hard slap on his face, but he saw nothing, and who think you could have slapped him but the Bonga?

Verily, he is a great Spirit, and powerful too. How for instance think you that the Sahib got so ill last month, and who gave him the illness? The Doctor Sahib said it was dysentery the Sahib had, and so the Khansama was thrashed, because the Sahib blamed the cooking for giving it to him, but I know better. Only a week before that did not the Sahib have several branches cut off from the Nohour Trees? And you as well as I know, brothers, that trees are sacred to the spirits who dwell in them,

* The Iron-hearted Timber Tree, *Mesua ferrea*.

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and that they were annoyed because their homes were destroyed by the Sahib. And so they sent him an illness as a punishment.

And you, Aonta Bearer, who was it tripped you up the other night when you were going from the cookhouse to the bungalow with the dinner? A snake you said, a King Cobra? Yea, but no ordinary snake. 'Twas the Spirit of the Trees in the form of one most likely, for you yourself say its eyes shone in the dark, and a flame came out of its mouth.

And what happened last night? The night chowkidar says a leopard came into the compound and roared under the bungalow. But he saw naught, only he heard the roar, and it seemed to come from about ten paces away from where he was lying. The Sahib awoke and taking his gun searched for over an hour for it, but he, too, saw nothing, though it was the sound of the roar that had awoken him. And this morning there is not the slightest trace of the pug marks of a leopard to be seen though if it had been a real leopard they would have assuredly been there. I have searched every inch of the ground myself but there is nothing, nothing! Nay, brothers, it was no leopard at all, but the Spirit again having its spite on the Sahib for the cutting of the branches of the Nohour Trees.

I tell you much evil will fall on this bungalow and those who serve it, and as for me, I simply cannot stay. To-morrow I get suddenly seized with pains in the stomach, and a new Paniwalla will be appointed, and well—when I am well again, I will drift back to the garden to hoe. I admit the Sahib is a good and just master, but how can I risk the anger of the Spirit, for will he not slay me and my family if I do?"

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And so the next day Matlamanji got his pains, and I had no Paniwalla. A few days after this the Cook absented himself from work also, and the Bearer sent word to say that he was suffering from fever. And then the Mali came and told me outright that he could not work for me, because I was in the bad books of the Spirit who inhabits the trees in my compound. I let them go into the garden because I was powerless to do anything else, as they simply would not stay in the bungalow.

Four days later, in the evening, just as it was getting dark, I was returning from a stroll in the garden. When passing under the Nohour Trees, I heard a most weird sound, and looking up, saw what appeared to be a small, hideous fat-paunched, grinning, human form staring down at me. My thoughts immediately went back to the tales the servants had told me about the trees in the compound being haunted by a devil, and for the minute I got a terrible fright.

There it sat waving its long arms about and grinning at me in a most diabolical manner, and in the uncertain light, it certainly looked more of a devil than anything else. I rubbed my eyes to see if I was imagining things, but no, it was there right enough, and suddenly a horrible croak from the thing made my hair stand up with fright. However, "bhoot or bonga, devil or ghost," I said to myself, "I will soon find out," so going into the bungalow I got my gun and fired at it. Down it came with a thud on the ground, and to my astonishment I found that I had shot a large Hullock monkey.

The mystery was at last cleared up! The Dhobie had a pet Hullock which used to break loose every night and take up its abode in the Nohour Trees in my compound,

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and the servants seeing it, immediately put it down to be a spirit, and I must admit, that seen in the dark the animal's appearance, as it sat on a branch waving its arms about and grinning, was certainly devilish.

The next morning I sent word to tell them that I had killed the Spirit of the Trees, and asked them to come and see it. They turned up fully expecting to see some eight-handed monster, and at first kept a respectful distance away from it, ready at any moment to take to flight. When I had removed the cloth I had covered it with however, and they saw it was only a monkey, the Cook and the Bearer grew shamefaced, but not so my Santhal Paniwalla. Going up to it he inspected the body minutely and then shook his head in a way that told me plainly he was not quite convinced.

"Yes, Huzoor, it seems to be a monkey. Perhaps it's also what I took to be a bhoot, so if you want me I will return to work in the bungalow again."

And the next morning, the first thing that met my gaze when I came downstairs was a lot of little earthenware plates filled with rice and gram and vermilion paint, laid at the foot of one of the Nohour Trees.

Matlamanji had made a puja to the departed Spirit Trees!

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NON-CO-OPERATION.

THE four women were gathered together one Sunday evening in a house in the lines. Raimot, a fine buxom Santhali woman, the wife of Matlamanji, Sirdar at Katalpani, had asked them to come and see her. After dispensing hospitality in the way of tea, which they drank out of little brass bowls, she called them to one end of the room, where they all squatted around the fire, for it was in the middle of the cold weather, and the talk began. All the gup and scandal that they had heard was now repeated. They spoke of the Belaiti Mems of the district, of the Sahibs and their carryings on at the Khel matti, of the other women on their respective gardens and how such and such a one was *bor tengor* and gave her husband such a lot of *dik dari* that he had to turn her out. How Kistomani, a Murari girl at Ramkhata, had a love affair with an Oorya boy named Banki ("the dirty hussy, an Oorya above all people!") and had been outcasted, and her parents heavily fined.

Then the talk turned to the trouble taking place on several gardens at that time, owing to the Non-Co-operation influence.

And then an old woman named Pano spoke. She was an ayah at the burra bungalow on a neighbouring garden where she had been working for fifteen years, and like the rest of them was a Santhal by caste, dark skinned and fierce tempered, like all of her race. "Oh! sisters," said she, "there are strange tales going around

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these days. They say that the Engrazi Raj is at an end in India, and that Ghandi is the King of Hindustan. The Ghandi-wallas have prevented the basti-wallas from bringing their goods to the hât, so that the Sahibs and all who work for them will be starved out, and will be forced to leave the country. In order to prevent this, the Sahibs have started patrolling the hâts on their ponies, but the Ghandi-wallas say they will secretly send men in to loot the hâts unless the traders stop bringing their wares there. A rumour has also been heard that the coolies on all the gardens in Sylhet have gone on strike, and that several Sahibs have been severely beaten, and bungalows and tea-houses have been burnt down, and the coolies demand to be sent back to their country. Moreover, they say, sisters, that the strikes are spreading, and will soon be here." "It's great zoolum, sister, indeed, and all this may have happened and be true; but do these stupid Ghandi-wallas think they will get the better of the Sahib-logs," the woman Raimot said. "Why, my husband says the Burra Sahib here told him that if the Sahibs cannot get the basti-wallas to bring food-stuffs to the hât, they will get them from Calcutta and why who will be the sufferers then but the basti-wallas. And as to Ghandi being the King of Hindustan, sister, you yourself told me you asked your Memsahib about that, and she laughed at you and said the Engrazi Raj was still the greatest power in the world, and could crush the Ghandi-wallas in a day if they liked."

"That may be true, O sister": Pano replied, "but the Sahibs have done very little publicly to counteract the effect of the Ghandi-wallas' zoolum. Only last week a Fakeer came to the lines in our garden. The Burra

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Sahib happened to be passing at the time, and saw him, and the Fakeer bent his head to the ground, salaamed, and called down blessings on the Sahib, but scarcely had he gone out of sight, when the evil one started inciting the coolies to go on strike and murder the feringhi as he called the Sahib. I happened to be near by and heard it all, and I went back to the bungalow at once, and informed my Memsahib about it. She told the Sahib, and all he did was to have the Fakeer turned out of the lines. Why, if that had been me; I would have had the evil one thrashed till he bled and then got him locked up in the thana. Anyway," she continued, "now all the coolies are very angry with me over this, and say I had no right to carry tales to the bungalow, but if I don't, who will ? for I have eaten the salt of the Sahib-logs for many years now, and the Santhals are always true to their salt. I am afraid to go to the lines now by myself lest they beat me. And, sisters, since the coming of this evil Fakeer to the lines, the badmashes are sullen tempered and purposely try to make the Burra Sahib lose control over himself and strike them, so that they can have an excuse for beating him. However, he is very patient with them, and overlooks many faults which in the days gone by he would never have stood. I am terrified, sisters, for one never knows where it will all end, and it will be a terrible thing if the Sahib and Memsahib, and my little Jani-baba are killed by these evil people."

The others sympathized with her and pretended to laugh at her fears, although they were fully aware that there was trouble brewing, and that any day now it might burst out, for Ghandi agents had been moving about the

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lines for some time, disguised as fakeers and beggars, inciting the coolies against the white men.

Just then, however, Matlamanji, Sirdar, came in, and after greeting him and answering questions about their health the party broke up and the three women started on their return journey homewards. The woman Raimot repeated the tales she had heard to her husband, but the latter laughed at her and said, "Why listen to old women's tales, and worry? I have worked for the Sahibs for many years, and know that they are the only true friends the coolies have, and whatever may happen, I and my ghosti will be true to their salt and stand by them. Anyhow, probably nothing will happen, so don't worry your head over what that old gossip Pano told you."

But, as things turned out, something did happen, and that very night the trouble broke out at Bag Parbut. While Pano was returning from Katalpani she was set upon near the lines by a gang of drunken coolies, with shouts of "Kill the spy! murder the tale carrier," and they thrashed her unmercifully and left her for dead in a drain.

Now gaining in numbers and armed with daos and heavy sticks, they rushed to the bungalow with the intention of burning it down and murdering the Manager, and his wife and child.

Henry, the Manager, however, had been expecting trouble for some time and had three young assistants from the gardens near by staying with him that night. He had just got information about the attack on his wife's ayah, and was on his way out to bring her in, when he saw the coolies howling and shouting, singing lewd

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songs, in which his name was mentioned, and evidently bent on destruction, so he got back to the bungalow as being the safer place to deal with them. He sent his wife into an inner room with their child, and gave her a revolver to defend herself with, and as a last resort to shoot the child and herself, should they all be killed. He now went out on to the verandah and waited for the coolies to come up with one of his companions, the other two being sent to guard the back entrance. On their arrival in the compound, he shouted to them to go back quietly to the lines, and told them he would overlook any damage they had already done if they would disperse peaceably. He was answered by a shower of bricks and shouts of "Ghandi Maharaj Ki Jai." Then their revolvers spoke; one volley over their heads, and another down near their feet soon settled it all. Black forms were falling over one another in their eagerness to get back to the lines.

Then Henry and one of his companions went down to the lines and brought the ayah in. She was not dead as had been reported to him, but was very seriously cut about on the face and head.

The next morning Henry went down to the lines as usual to turn the coolies out. Here and there sullen faces greeted him, but not a word escaped him about the previous night's happenings.

The coolies were astonished. They had fully expected the Sahib to turn up with the Police and arrest a number of them, and many had decided that when this should happen they would give the game away, and put the blame on other shoulders. Now here was the Sahib with a smile on his face, walking about the lines as if the night before had never been. Truly, the Sahibs

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were a queer folk. Who could ever understand the working of their brains ?

In a short while they started gaining confidence. First of all one man came out with his hoe on his shoulder looking sheepishly to right and left. Soon he was followed by another and another, till within an hour all the coolies were out.

Mrs. Henry's ayah recovered, and is very proud of the fact that it was through the information that she gave her Memsahib, that the Sahib was able to prevent the trouble getting more serious. Nursing little "Jani-baba" on her knee, she croons him songs in Santhali about the evil men who beat her severely, and tried to murder him, and his mother and father. Her song generally ends, "a curse on all Ghandi-wallas."

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THE SAHIB'S GRAVE.

On my first visit to Makrajan, after my transfer there, the Manager after showing me around the garden, on the way home, pointed to a place in the thatch bari, and told me there was an old grave there of a planter who had died at Makrajan a few years before the Indian Mutiny.

Naturally I became interested in this old grave, and after a few days, I got hold of old Goramanji Sirdar and told him to take me to see the Sahib's Kabr. This he did, and I saw before me a simple grave, with a brick foundation, and a stone slab bearing the following inscription :—

IN AFFECTIONATE MEMORY

OF

ROBERT HALIFAX,

Son of Benjamin Halifax, Esq.,

Of Chadburn Castle in the County of Sussex, who died at Makrajan on the 12th August, 1853.

I stood there dead to the things around me, thinking of the man buried beneath me, one of the Pioneer Planters of Assam, of the hardships he must have had to endure in those old days with no roads, no railways, no club, and no one of his own class to mix with or talk to ; buried away in the back of beyond with only his work to break the monotony of his humdrum existence. My dreams

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were suddenly broken into by old Goramanji saying, "If the Huzoor permits me I will tell him some tales about this grave."

Old Goramanji is a great old man. He loves to talk about the good old days, and to boast of the fact that he has been on the garden for forty years, among the coolies over whom he is a Sirdar. He is also a great teller of tales, and as I am always ready to hear about the history of the Garden, and listen to his tales, he and I are great friends. On giving him permission to speak he started off as follows :—

"About twenty years ago, Huzoor, a tale went round the lines among the budmashes, that when a Sahib dies all his wealth is buried with him. Naturally, the budmashes among whom one Krisna Gond was the leader, starting casting eyes at this grave, and they planned among themselves, that on the first night of the full moon, they would dig open the grave and steal the wealth that was supposed to have been buried there. A few nights later it was full moon, and taking their hoes and daos with them, together with big lathis, they crept out of the lines at midnight.

All went well with them at first. They got to the grave and started breaking it open, but before they had done much damage, one of their number, one Ramooji Moonda, suddenly gave a terrible shout and fell down on the ground in a fit. His companions immediately gathered around him, and on picking him up they saw a big King Cobra gliding away from under him to the hoola nearby. Where it came from no one could tell but the fact remained that the unfortunate man had been bitten by it, and he expired within a few minutes.

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As soon as they realised what had happened, they grew terribly afraid, for they thought that the Sahib's soul had taken the form of a Cobra to guard his grave, and to take vengeance on them for trying to desecrate it, and picking up their dead companion, they bolted back to the lines.

The next morning, when Kari Sahib, who was in charge of Makrajan at that time, heard of it, he became very angry, and sending for the men he thrashed them severely, and fined them Rs. 20 each.

From that day however, Huzoor, though the coolies still think that wealth is buried in it, the Sahib's grave has been left unmolested, for all of them believe that it is guarded by his spirit in the form of a snake, and that anyone who tries to do harm to it, will meet with the same fate as Ramooji Moonda did.

Another belief among the coolies, Huzoor, is that the Sahib's spirit often roams about the garden on certain nights dressed in white, the same as if he were doing kamjari. Several people are supposed to have seen it, and the coolies say that anyone seeing it always gets good luck."

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THE QUEEN'S PRISON.

It was a Sunday morning, and taking my gun with me I had gone out for a stroll in the garden on the chance of coming across something to shoot. I had hardly been out five minutes when I heard some jungle fowl crowing in a section of tea near by, and going over to it, I was lucky enough to get two fine birds with one shot. I picked them up, and gave them to a boy I had with me, and then thought I would walk up the river on the chance of coming across something else to shoot. Besides, I had heard that there were some ruins to be seen about a mile up the river, and was rather anxious to have a look at them.

I had tried to find out the history of these ruins, but no one could tell me anything about them, not even old Goramanji, who usually was quite an authority on any subject of this sort. However, the old man had promised to make enquiries about them, and after some time, he joined me, as he had heard that I was going up to inspect them that morning.

"Well Booda," I said, after returning his salutation, "have you found out anything about these ruins yet?"

"Yes Huzoor," he replied, "only last night could I find anyone to tell me about them. The Huzoor remembers asking me several times about them, and I telling him I did not know what they were."

"Yes," I replied.

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" Well, Huzoor, when I saw the Sahib was interested in them, I went round making enquiries in all the villages here. For a long time, however, I could not get any information about them at all, till at last the Gaon Booda of Ramgaon Basti sent me to an old man named Khong, who lives there, and is reputed to be over a hundred years old, and he told me that perhaps Khong might be able to give me some information about them as he knew the history of all the places here, since he has lived here for many, many years even in the days of the Assam Kings. Accordingly Huzoor, as I knew that the Sahib would be coming here some day to see them, I went to see old Khong last night, and this is the tale he told me.

Long, long ago Huzoor, the old man said, that a certain King reigned at Sibsagar, who was noted for being a very wise and just ruler. However, he was married to a woman who was nasty-tongued and ill-tempered, and made his life most unbearable. On this account the King seldom stayed in the palace, and was constantly going out on his pony, often alone, and sometimes with only a single follower. Often he would appear at towns and villages where he was least expected, and in this manner one afternoon, he came to Tambul Khawa Basti, which is but two miles away from this garden, Huzoor.

Now it so happened that on this particular day Adoni, the daughter of Kokro Gaon Booda was sitting in her yard weaving, when she heard the sounds of a horse's footsteps and looking up she saw a handsome man seated on a beautiful black horse looking very intently at her. Naturally the girl being but a country lass grew shy, and hiding her face with her sari, she ran into her

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house, and told her father that a man on a black horse was standing on the roadside opposite their doorway and her father came out to see who it was.

Now her father had never seen the King before, but when he saw a well-dressed gentleman before him, he asked him very politely if he could aid him in any way. This was just what the King was waiting for, for the beauty of the girl's face had made his heart like water, and he secretly had resolved that he would make her his second wife, so he told the Gaon Booda that he was a noble of the King's household who had gone out riding that morning, and had lost his way, and as he was very hungry he would deem it a great favour if he would invite him in to sup with him.

The Gaon Booda on hearing this begged him to come in at once, telling him that anyone of the King's household was only too welcome in his house, and that he would give him all that his poor larder could supply. The King then came in and as soon as possible food was prepared, and laid before him, the beautiful Adoni serving him personally at the meal.

The more the King saw of the girl, the more he fell in love with her, and he yearned to tell her who he was, and beg her to be his wife, but thinking it best not to let his identity be known for the present, he resisted the impulse. However, he spoke kindly to old Kokro, and asked him about the crops, and the health of the village, and the taxes they paid, and after some time, as it was getting late, asked to be allowed to take his leave, telling him he would not forget to mention the kind way he had been treated, to the King, who would amply reward him for being kind to one of his household. Kokro thanked

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him for this, and the King then took leave of them and departed.

Now when he arrived home at the palace, he immediately summoned his ministers and the Queen to his presence, and told them that he intended to take to himself a second wife as the Queen was barren, and there would be no heir to the gadi after his death unless he married again.

The Ministers were very pleased at this and readily gave their consent, but the Queen—she of the evil tongue, Huzoor—immediately flew into a temper, and abused him, and protested against him doing anything of the sort, but this time the King would not listen to her, and ordered the new palace which had just been completed to be got ready to receive his new wife within a few days.

The next day he despatched messengers with a letter to Kokro, the Gaon Booda of Tambul Khawa Basti, disclosing his identity to him, and ordering him to prepare immediately for the marriage of his daughter, Adoni, with him.

Of course when Kokro got this letter he was overwhelmed, for he had no idea that the man whom he had entertained the day before, was the King, and now here was a greater honour conferred on him by the King in seeking the hand of his daughter in marriage.

"Truly," he said to himself, "I am a great man, for now I will be the father-in-law to the King, and if the Gods are good, the Grandfather of a King's son."

However for the next few days, the village was all a-bustle with the preparations for the marriage and after a week the girl departed to Sibsagar, and was married to the King, who installed her in the new palace.

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Naturally she was his favourite, and now the old Queen grew very jealous, and determined to do her an injury, and turn the King against her. However, she hid her hate in her heart, and going to see her co-wife, she spoke to her pleasantly, telling her she was very pleased that the King had brought her there, and she hoped she would be a good wife to him and bear him children as she had failed to do.

Naturally the poor village girl was taken in with the old witch's cunning, and when she heard her speak so sweetly, thought she was a very kind and unselfish woman, and got to like her greatly, and after some time she even begged the King to allow her to come and take up her abode with them in the new palace.

Now Huzoor, there was in the King's Service at that time a Naga Chief named Run Sen, who was in command of the Palace Guard. He was a very handsome man of a powerful stature, and as brave as a lion, and was one of the King's favourites.

Now Run Sen, for all his powerful stature and his bravery was but a man, so when he saw the beautiful Adoni at the time of her marriage with the King, he fell hopelessly in love with her. This made him very unhappy for he knew there was no chance of him ever getting the girl, and besides the love that he bore his master, prevented him from showing her that he loved her, so he tried to banish all thoughts of the girl from his heart.

Now by some means or the other the King's first wife—she of the evil-tongue, Huzoor—got to know of the Naga's love for the fair Adoni, and she did her best to bring them together in every way possible, hoping that the

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Naga would forget himself, and declare his love to the girl, so that she could tell the King about it, and get Adoni disgraced. So when the young Queen decided to go on a pilgrimage, she prevailed on her to ask the King to put the Naga Chief in charge of the Guard that was to accompany her, and as the King fully trusted the Naga, he readily consented to this. The old witch, also by a bit of scheming, got one of her own maid-servants to be included in the Queen's retinue, so that she could spy on the young Queen.

When the time arrived, Huzoor, after bidding an affectionate farewell to the King, the fair Adoni set out from Sibsagar in her palanquin, surrounded by her guard and her servants.

It was a very hot day, and after travelling for about four hours, she called a halt near a little brook, under the shade of a pipal tree. As she felt very cramped from sitting in the palanquin for so long, she got out and walked about with her maid-servants in order to stretch her legs, and for the first time saw the Naga Chief. She was greatly struck with his handsome face, and manly bearing, and so called him to her and spoke to him, asking him his name, and where he hailed from, and did he like being in charge of her guard on this journey. All the time he stood in front of her his love kept surging up, and he longed to tell her that he loved her, that she was his goddess, and he would gladly die for her, but he held himself in check, and only answered that to serve her was his greatest pleasure.

The Queen was greatly taken with his gallant reply, and after this on the journey would often call him to the side of her palanquin and speak to him as they went along.

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Now the old Queen's spy took note of all this, and when the pilgrimage was over, and Adoni had returned to the palace, told her mistress all about it.

" She of the evil-tongue " was now greatly pleased, and as soon as she got an opportunity to talk to the King alone, addressed herself to him.

" Thou didst not tell me my Lord," she said, " when thou didst decide to take to thyself another wife that thou wert bringing a harlot to share thy bed? "

" What meanest thou woman ? " the King demanded.

" What mean I ? Look to thy fair favourite my Lord and watch the Captain of thy household guard, for if what I hear be true, they are in league with one another. Perhaps the little country lass is far cleverer than my Lord knows."

The King became infuriated. " Vile slanderer," he said catching hold of her by the shoulders, " speak so that I can understand thee."

" She of the evil-tongue " now flew into a rage and abused him, telling him he was a simple fool, and that Adoni was unfaithful to him and loved the Naga Chief, and that on the pilgrimage she and he were continually talking and whispering together.

The King's rage knew no bounds now, and throwing her to the ground he walked out of the room for fear that he might kill her.

His first thoughts were of summoning the Naga Chief and the fair Adoni before him and demanding an explanation but after thinking the matter over, he decided to watch them secretly.

" By Mahadeo ! " he said, " if there is truth in aught the old vixen has told me, they shall die."

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A few days later, Huzoor, while the Naga was inspecting the guard at the palace door, it so happened that Adoni the young Queen, came to her window and stood there gazing out at the scenery. The Naga Chief saw her, and when he passed her window he raised his hand to his head in a reverent salute to the young Queen. The Queen smiled down at him and returned his salute, and spoke a few words to him.

Now it so happened that the King, who was walking in the palace grounds at the time, saw this and immediately his heart was filled with jealousy and rage for all that his old wife had told him came back to his mind again, and his suspicions were aroused, for here with his own eyes did he not see the Naga smiling at her, and she smiling back at him? Truly all that the old witch had told him must be true and his favourite must be unfaithful to him.

He was now roused into a fury and rushed into the young Queen's apartments, and catching hold of her roughly, accused her of carrying on an intrigue with the Naga. "Vile harlot," he said, "little did I think when I brought thee here that thou would'st demean thyself so. Speak slut, speak or thou and thy guilty lover shall die!"

The Queen denied the accusations, and begged him to believe she was innocent. How could her Lord doubt her when she loved him so? He was her life, her all, and she his slave had done naught to harm him.

"Did I not see thee myself but a few minutes gone, holding converse with thy lover, and smiling at him," the King said. "Dost think I am a fool, woman, not to see through all thy vileness?"

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"Yea, my Lord, I did speak to the Naga, but he is not my lover, and no word of love ever passed my lips," she replied. "Enough! enough!" said the King, "thou art condemned with thine own mouth, for what right hast thou to speak to any other man but me?"

He now summoned his ministers and ordered the Naga to be arrested and executed.

The Queen begged him to spare the Naga but this only infuriated him more.

"Were he not thy lover, woman, why would'st thou plead for him?"

"He is no lover of mine, my Lord," she said, "but as he is innocent of all guile I pray thee to have mercy on him and spare his life."

However, he would not listen to her.

"I would slay thee this instant thyself were it not for thy state"—the Queen was to become a mother, Huzoor—"but thou shalt be imprisoned for life, thou and thy brat. 'Tis no child of mine, most likely but of yonder Naga lover of thine. By Mahadeo! Nay, he shall die, and see to it," he said addressing his Courtiers, "that he is tortured for twelve hours before he is executed. Begone!" he said screaming at his wife, "begone from my sight or I will slay thee!"

His Courtiers tried to pacify him, but all to no avail, and he fell on the floor in a fit of rage and raved and tore at his hair and clothes, till they had to carry him away to his apartments.

The next morning the Naga Chief was executed, and his body thrown on the dung heap for the scavenger Dogs and Jackals to eat.

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"The Queen was sent away to a lonely prison many miles away from the Capital, the ruins of which the Huzoor sees before him now.

When the time arrived, she gave birth to her child, and for many years afterwards lived here in dreary banishment with only one woman as a companion—one of her maid-servants who had volunteered to go with her. They say she was continually weeping, and even to this day the old man told me at certain times the sounds of a woman weeping and wailing can be heard here.

This is the tale I was told last night, Huzoor. The old Booda said, that when he was a boy, the building was still standing, and was known all around as the *Ráni Ki Kaid, but as it was reputed to be haunted, no one would go near it. The bank of the river then was a good distance away from where it is now, he said Huzoor, but the river kept cutting in every year, until at last it undermined the foundation of the building and it tumbled down, and so there is nothing left of the Queen's Prison, save these stones, and in a few years they too will be washed away, and there will be naught to show where an unfortunate Queen suffered and wept so much!"

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*Ráni Ki Kaid—The Queen's Prison.

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GORAMANJI'S BHOOT.

It was old Goramanji again. He had heard I had just arrived back from leave, so had come to pay his respects with his son.

"Well Booda," I said, "how are things with you and your family?"

"By the Huzoor's favour I am quite well," he replied, "but I nearly died just after you took the big boat to cross the Kalapani to your home in Belait. Ah! Huzoor, I have had much evil fortune after you, who are my ma-bap, left the garden. Now that you have returned by the favour of God things will go well with me again."

"Why Booda, what happened?" I said. "Surely the new Sahib helped you in every way?"

"Yes Huzoor," he replied, "the new Sahib was most kind and considerate to me, but I am troubled about something and I am afraid to speak about it as you might laugh at me."

"Come, come Goramanji," I said, "tell me what it is. If I can help you in anyway, you know I will."

His face became most serious, and I seemed to see fear in the old man's eyes.

"There's nothing to be afraid of," I said coaxingly. "Tell me your trouble and I'll do my best to help you."

"What can I say, Huzoor," he said at last. "Laugh at me if you will but my liver has turned to water with fretting. The fact is I have seen a bhoot!"

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I laughed, "A bhoot Goramanji? Surely it must have been after a heavy drinking bout that this wonderful bhoot appeared to you? And where did you see it and what did it say?"

"Hai hai, the Sahib laughs as I thought he would," he said, "but perhaps if the Huzoor listens to my story he might believe me."

"Cheer up Goramanji," I said, "you must not fret about it, but let me hear the tale and I'll see what I can do for you."

"The Huzoor knows," he said, "that two years ago my third wife Hoopni died in childbirth?"

"Yes," I replied, "I remember her death quite well."

"The Huzoor also knows," he continued, "that we coolies believe that when a woman dies in childbirth, she turns into a bhoot, and haunts the place she died in?"

I nodded, and my thoughts went back to several tales that had been told to me by the coolies about women who died in childbirth haunting the houses they had died in, and crying for their little lost babies. It was one of the commonest beliefs among the coolies in the garden, and often a man or a woman had come running to me in a terrible state of excitement and told me they had just seen the spirit of some woman or the other who had died in childbirth a short time before, who, they said, was crying and wailing in a terrible manner for her baby.

I generally did not encourage these tales, as they were liable to cause a panic among the coolies. Several houses in the lines were vacant because of such stories, and nothing would ever induce the coolies to live in them because the tale had got about that they were

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haunted, for they believed that anyone occupying them would be visited with death or severe illness within a short time.

Consequently, the circulation of these kind of stories caused me a great deal of trouble, and whenever I heard them I tried my best to put a stop to them, but as old Goramanji was a sensible sort of fellow and the oldest coolie on the garden, I let the matter pass without a comment.

"Well Huzoor," he went on, "my wife Hoopni's spirit had been seen haunting the site of my old house on the hill at the back of No. 12 for a long time. Several people had seen it, and told me about it, but as the Huzoor knows, since her death, I shifted to a house in the lines, and so seldom had occasion to go there, excepting when I went to offer up a Puja to her spirit at the little shrine I had made under a Pipul tree near the old house.

"Now, Huzoor, three weeks after you left the garden to go to your home, I made such a Puja there again. After the various offerings had been made, and the prayers finished, as is usual, we got several khalsis of Laopani, which we had brought with us for the occasion, and offered them around to all those who were present. We started drinking and talking, and in this manner the time went on, till we suddenly discovered that it was getting dark, and as one or two of the men were getting intoxicated, I thought it time we broke up the meeting, and went back to our houses.

I told the rest of the people to go on ahead, with the exception of my son whom I made stay behind to help me gather up the various vessels and clothes

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which we had brought with us. I found, however, that there were too many for both of us to carry, so I told my son to take as much as he could in a basket, and then come back for some more, and that if he could, to bring my nephew back with him to help us with the load.

My son went away, Huzoor, and I was left all alone. I began to feel a little uneasy at first, but bit by bit gained a little more confidence, and then lit a cigarette and sat down on a stone that happened to be lying near the shrine.

Several jackals howled round about me, giving me a start, and *then* I saw what appeared to be two large fiery eyes like living balls of fire appear at the edge of the jungle.

This gave me a terrible fright, and though I got cold shivers down my spine, I still sat there and showed no fear, though inwardly I was quaking.

And then I saw the thing, Huzoor. A woman's form dressed in white emerged from out of the jungle, and came advancing towards me. On, on it came, down one side of the hoola and up the other, crying and weeping all the time, and looking here and there as if it was seeking something, till at last it stood only a few paces away from me.

And the form that I saw before me was that of my wife Hoopni, Huzoor! Bapre bap! Huzoor, I tried to cry out, but my tongue was struck dumb within my mouth, and I thought I should die of fright, but I could do nothing for I felt paralyzed. My knees gave way under me, and I fell down on to the ground, and remained there for some time.

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When I opened my eyes the form was still near me. 'Where is my child?' it demanded. 'Where is my child? Ai ai! my pearl! my baby!'

I knew now, Huzoor, that if I didn't do something my heart would stop beating, so after a frantic effort I managed to gasp out 'who art thou?'

'Ah' the ghost replied, 'thou art here? Thou wert my husband, but I want my child, it is lost, my little heart's core, my delight!'

I now got bolder, Huzoor, and sat up. 'Thy child was buried with thee, O spirit. Go to thy rest' I heard myself saying like one in a dream.

Then the spirit turned on me, and a bright flame shot out of its mouth, and it howled and cursed and tore its hair, telling me all the time to get up and search for the child.

Huzoor, what could I do? I could not move, much less search for a spirit child whom I knew was dead for many months, fear had made me quite helpless, but when the spirit saw I did not obey it lashed at me with its phantom hands, and screeched and shouted. Then what happened I do not know, but all of a sudden it stopped making a noise, and seemed to be listening intently to something, to some sound in the distance. It then gave three terrific yells, and floated over the hoola calling out 'Ai ai! my pearl! my baby!' as it went along."

"As for me, Huzoor, as soon as it floated away on the air I fainted. How long I lay there I am unable to say, but after what seemed to me to be a considerable time I felt someone shaking me, and pushing me about. The spirit again I thought, but this time it was not so, but my son come back to fetch the rest of the mal.

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'Are beta,' I said to him, 'I die. What has kept thee so long, for lo! thy father has seen a spirit, the spirit of thy step-mother.'

The boy grew greatly alarmed, and explained that he had been delayed in the house as his uncle, my brother, had got rowdy, and he had to stay there in order to prevent him doing any mischief. He lifted me up, Huzoor, but I was too weak to walk, and he had to carry me home.

For a long time after this I lay in bed at the point of death, but by the favour of God, I am well again now.

Now, Huzoor, yesterday I went to see the Sakaharia, whom you know is a soothsayer and also deals in witchcraft, and when I told him about seeing the vision of my wife, and how worried I was over it, he made a Puja and went into a trance. When he came around again he told me he had seen and spoken to the spirit of my Hoopni, and that she was very annoyed with me and would work great evil on me unless he made Pujas on my behalf to her. He demanded fifty rupees from me for this purpose, and when I told him I did not have the money to give him, he told me that I would assuredly die within a few months if I did not give him the money. And, Huzoor, I have no money at all to give him, for all that I had saved was spent in my illness."

"Now Booda," I said, "I have heard all you have told me. As for you dying unless you give the Sakaharia fifty rupees, that's all rubbish for he's only playing on you. I'll go and see him, and tell him what I think of him, and if you go to him afterwards you'll probably find that he'll tell you he's had another talk with your wife's spirit, and that she no longer requires Pujas, and he won't want the money. Now as to what you saw, if you

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did see anything, and it was not a drunken dream, you come with me to the same place any night, and I will explain it to you, and prove to you that it was no spirit at all, but only shadows and the moonlight and the wails of a few jackals which made your imagination work, so that you thought you saw a spirit, so there's no need for you to work yourself into a state of terror for nothing."

The old man shook his head, "No! no! Huzoor, I will never go to that spot again, not even though you threatened to kill me if I did not go."

"All right Booda," I said, "then at least go and see the Sakaharia on Monday morning, and abide by what he says. He is a clever man and claims to hold converse with the Gods and evil spirits, so perhaps he might find some other way out of the difficulty for you."

To this old Goramanji agreed and he left me looking slightly more hopeful than when he came.

The next day I went to see the Sakaharia, and after giving him a severe talking to, threatened to put him in the hands of the police for an imposter if he caused any more trouble with my coolies, and I came away feeling confident that when he saw Goramanji again he would have a different tale to tell him.

On Tuesday morning, Goramanji came to me looking a different man. He immediately announced with a smile all over his face, that he had seen the holy man, who had told him that he had had another trance, and spoken to his wife Hoopni's spirit and that all the old man would have to do was to give him five rupees for Pujas, and he would not be troubled with his wife's spirit any more, and would live for many years yet.

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Thus it is that quacks and imposters playing on the credulity of the ignorant coolies extort money from them, and make them believe the most impossible tales. "Yes, India is a great country," I said to myself, "but who so foolish and childish as the ignorant native?"

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SONGS.

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POLO.

Sitting astride my pony,
Riding my old brown mare,
Chasing the white ball up and down
Hitting it here and there;
Riding like —'ll with excitement,
Doing my utmost and best,
Give me my chukker of polo,
And I'll leave you to take all the rest.

Tennis at times is quite thrilling,
Soccer and rugger quite good,
Cricket is slow in the uptake,
Golf I would play if I could.
But what is there to beat Polo,
What sport with it can compare?
Whacking the ball and riding your all,
Astride of your old brown mare.

There's Mac our jolly old captain,
He shouts like the de'il to the wind,
And he rides on an old grey pony
That has left its youth far behind;
But every time we've a match on,
He pulls up its girth by two holes,
He plays like the deuce, he knows every ruse
In the way of scoring us goals.

Yes, get you a horse to ride on
And a polo stick in your hand,
And a little white ball that rises to fall
And a keenness you'll soon understand.
Leave your cricket—and tennis
And any old game beside,
But have your chukker of polo
As long as you're able to ride.

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Sitting astride of my pony,
Riding my old brown mare,
Chasing the white ball up and down
Hitting it here and there.
Riding like —'ll with excitement
Doing my utmost and best,
Give me my polo always,
And I'll leave you to take all the rest.

THE ASSAM VALLEY LIGHT HORSE.

I've joined the army once again, I've joined up in the forces,
I'm getting very muddled up with spurs and bits and horses ;
I'm used to gravel crushing, and dishing out the soup,
But I'm blest if I know what to do when I'm mixed up with the troop.
Oh it's head left, and head right and threes about and trot,
Form half-sections left or right ; or some such other rot.
But it's nice to be a sodger man in a very famous force,
So I'm now a full blown trooper in the Assam Valley Horse.

I went to camp at Dibrugarh, the Adjutant said " Hi !
You've got to be a Sergeant and drill your men thereby."
I called the troop a company and made them all form fours,
While mounted on their horses amidst a great applause.
Oh it's wheel left, and wheel about, and change direction right,
My horse, he galloped off with me, I had to hold on tight.
He took me to a water tank and gently bucked me off,
And the Sergeant-Major laughed and said ' I was a blinking toff.'

But I'm grad-u-ally learning the whys and wherefores now,
And I'll soon be quite efficient in my drilling anyhow.
Then I'll take an—er—commission if they offer it to me,
And I'll mix up drills and horses in the making of the tea.
'Twill be head left, and head right, and roll the leaf quite hard,
That horse has got a snip and blaze, oh well ! the blighter's starred.
You've got to keep the temperature at eighty-two at least,
Now look here Trooper Brown you'll have to take care of that beast.

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But I'm only joking with you, and I think that every man
Should join the fine A. V. L. H., and drill too if he can,
Remember what their motto is and try to do your best,
And old " Semper Paratus " will surely do the rest ;
So come along you youngsters and do your little bit,
You've a duty to your country ; you've a target there to hit.
There's nothing like good soldiering so do all that you can,
A keen efficient soldier is a keen efficient man.

THE LADIES IN TEA.

The ladies in tea they are charming,
They make our dull lives full of cheer ;
E'en though their chief topic is scandal,
And they squabble and fight half the year.
That, they tell us is woman's first privilege,
They can pull every fellow to bits,
And they're jealous of each other's dresses,
Till their husbands are out of their wits.

Just watch them at club in the evening
They sit in a circle and chat,
They're discussing some fellow in private
As to why he does this and does that ;
They know all about his shortcomings,
They have Ayahs to tell them you see,
But with all their big faults, I must tell you,
We love the dear Ladies in tea.

A LEGEND OF THE VICEROY'S COUNCIL.

Babu Chunder Chatterjee
Bowbazar Swaraj M. P.
Got up in the Viceroy's Council
Spoke of Planters every day ;
Said " They most emphatic bully,
Weakly native, wretched cooly,
Starved them, flogged them morn and even,
Robbed them of their pay."

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"Put them into wells where leeches
Made them bleed, and gave them 'eaches,'
Worked them like vile galley slaves
Both by night and day."
"Trafficking in flesh" he called it,
And his Swaraj friends they bawled it,
From the lobby in their speeches,
In their simple way.

So I thought I'd go and see
Those most dreadful men in tea,
Find some evidence to damn them,
Find some evidence I say.
I could almost see the leeches
And the coolies with "the eaches"
And the men and women starving,
Robbed of all their pay.

To some gardens Dibru side
Quickly then myself I hied,
And the coolies we observed there
Both I and my spies;
All were happy, well, contented,
And the fairy tales presented
In the Legislative Council
Were a pack of lies.

IN MEMORY OF A MURDER.

In mem'ry of a Murder, and in mem'ry of a Man,
Who faced a howling cooly mob and never turned or ran,
But the Swaraj Politicians said he got his deserts there,
When they hacked him into pieces and laid his body bare.

In mem'ry of a Murder, yes, a filthy dirty deed,
Incited by an Indian "Saint" who spoke of India freed,
Who stirred *plebeian* masses against the white man's rule,
But wasn't smart enough to see 'twas he who was the fool.

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He spoke of high ambitions and honour in the land,
He spoke of vile oppression, but he didn't understand
That once the mob tastes power 'tis out of all control,
And murder, lust and pillage is its very natural toll.

In mem'ry of a Murder, it may happen any day,
And you and I may have the same stern penalty to pay.
But I'd rather be the murdered man, aye, gladly anytime,
Than be the honour'd Indian " Saint " inciting men to crime.

KAMJARI.

I'm going on kamjari,
It is long past half past eight,
And I've lots of blooming work to do,
And as it is I'm late.
There's the hoeing and the plucking
Which are never properly done.
So I'm going on kamjari
Just to have a bit of fun.

It's Maytime here in 'ssam,
The Home folk say, " how sweet " !
They think it's like the English Spring
That cheers you quite a treat ;
They forget about the Indian sun
That burns your face right off,
And the heat and the mosquitoes
At which we're supposed to scoff.

Then there's the Indian Cuckoo,
He's a topping little bloke,
He shouts " You're ill " the whole day long
And makes you vent to choke.
And the dear old " Make-More-Pekoe,"
The harbinger of rain,
You're very pleased to hear him,
Yet, you wish him lots of pain.

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No, it's not so beastly dusty
When you're walking round at noon
To have your body roasted
Or to feel you'd like to swoon;
Or to stay for hours soaking,
While the Ague makes you shiver,
And you feel at peace with all the world,
With a lovely Assam liver;

Or to work inside the Teahouse
When your head is spinning round.
And your temperature's a hundred
And you want to hit the ground;
While the machines go clatter clatter
And make an awful din,
Oh you quite enjoy the row they make
'Neath the blazing Teahouse tin.

So cheerio, you fellows,
And come along with me,
I'll show you how to prune and hoe
And manufacture tea.
It's really not so dusty,
Though we've got our troubles here,
And it ain't exactly skittles
And mopping up of beer;
But if you stick it, it may mean
A thousand pounds a year.

PLUCKING TIME.

The Pruning's sometime finished,
And the Deep-Hoe too is done
And it's getting on
Towards the plucking days,
When our Oorya maidens jabber,
And Koel starts to blabber,
And the flaming sun sends down
His burning rays.

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Oh it's plucking time, my lassies,
And, your baskets all are full,
(There's a brick below
If only you could see),
But the Sahib he doesn't look there,
And he'll never find that brick there,
So just come along and
Pluck the leaf with me.

What if we take a leaf or two
Too much, it doesn't count,
(There'll be lots of jabra
Stalk within the tea)
The Sahib might call us " Sali "
Or perhaps some other gali,
But we always get the best
Of it you see.
Oh it's plucking time, my lassies,
And your baskets all are full,
(There are bricks below
If only he could see)
And a basket's easy heavied,
By some lead that we have levied,
From a Mistry in the Teahouse, Chunder Bee.

The Sahib persists in working,
And talking too of work,
We feel quite limp when
He goes on that way,
For we cannot stand the bridle,
We prefer to sit and idle,
And for doing nothing,
Still to draw big pay.
Oh it's plucking time, my lassies,
And the money's coming in,
(An extra brick will make
You draw more pay);

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Yes, we'll teach you how to cheat,
We can do it quite a treat,
So just listen sisters all
To what I say.

PLUCKING.

Scene.— A section of Tea in a garden in Assam. Along both edges of the section the cooly women are put on their pais opposite each other and as they pluck the leaf they sing :—

"Plucking, plucking, plucking of the leaf,
Strictly just two and a bud, but take another sheaf
The Sahib is on kamjari and the burra babu's far,
Two pice a seer to spend in the bazaar."

Saraswati—"Plucking, plucking, plucking all the leaf
Budhni you're a Sali, the mother of a thief,
Get back or I will hit you," but Budhni turns around
And slaps poor Saraswati's face and fells her to the ground.

While the fight is going on all the women shout and scream and swear at one another, and the manager hearing the row comes to find out what is the matter. Budhni explains :—

Budhni—"Plucking, plucking, I was plucking leaf
And that wife of a thousand husbands, Sahib,
She said I was a thief.
She caught me by the nose ring and
She pulled my hair right out
And all that I did, Huzoor, was
To strike my breast and shout."

Saraswati—"Plucking, plucking, Huzoor, she's a liar,
That cross-eyed wife of bats and owls,
May she e'er burn in fire.
She came across and scratched me
And she tore my nose ring out ;
So, Huzoor, what was I to do, I gave her one good clout."

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Chorus of women.—"Plucking, plucking, plucking, all the leaf,
Huzoor, they're both liars,
And each of them's a thief.
Slap the hussies' faces,
And paint them both with tar
And do not give them money for the big bazaar."

In the meantime the manager gets flustered with all the howling and shouting and abusing that is going on. He turns his eyes to the skies for inspiration, puts his hands to his head, incidentally knocking off his topee, and exclaims :—

"Plucking, plucking, you were plucking leaf.
All of you are liars, each of you's a thief.
Stop your tommy nonsense or I'll send you both afar ;
Then you'll have no money to spend in the bazaar."

With this tremendous effort he falls down in a faint, and curtain falls on him lying on the ground with Budhni and Saraswati fanning him with the ends of their saris, and talking to one another in quite a friendly manner, while the one-eyed Dr. Babu does a cake-walk in trying to administer restoratives.

THE TEAHOUSE BLOKE.

The Fact'ry starts at 4 A.M., I'm as fed up as can be,
Oh Lord ! Why ever did I come to this wretched job in tea.
I've got to see it started and stay there all the day
And all I get's two-hundred rotten dibs as monthly pay.

The garden man is lucky, his work is done by four,
And the plucking and the hoeing they worry him no more.
But I've just got to carry on and work right up to ten,
And start the morning after, at 3 A.M. again.

Last week we had a thousand maunds, I had some work to do
To wither and to roll it and to make tea of it too,
Then the damned old engine busted, and the manager went mad,
And I got the biggest telling off that I have ever had.

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Still, I don't mind Jinks' tellings off, he's not too bad a chap,
One is apt to get excited when the Agents start to rap.
And he always says he's sorry, when he finds he's gone too far,
And makes it up in many ways when he gives a man a jar.

So things are not so bad you know, in their own peculiar way,
We've got our job, and do it, though we don't get too much pay.
But some day I'll be a manager and get commission too,
And have my car and horses on a very decent screw.

So, cheerio you teahouse blokes, and make your engines run,
Though Fact'ry life is boring, still there's always lots of fun
To be had with your machinery, and if late the hours be,
There's always Kudos to be had in the making of good tea.
Yes you'll get a putty medal if you go and make good tea!

THE BABU'S PETITION.

Most Honoured Sir, I humbly beg
To send this letter by the leg
Of one poor menial from my house,
And hope, kind Sir, you will not grouse.
Its purport, how may I explain,
For I am put to greatest pain,
And know your honour muchly wise
Will help to drive away the flies
That seek my household to devour
And make my hearthstones cold and sour.
Kind Sir, in brief, my debts are many
And cash, alas! I haven't any
And family much increasing now,
So I must feed them anyhow.
First twins arrived, in damn great state
At howling fits they both are great
Disturbing peace of wretched mind
Till I am almost mad, I find.
Now once more for my sins alas,
A daughter, Sir, has come to pass,

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And so the female population
Within my house, like great equation
Increase, and wretched creature I
Must have great motes within my eye!
And so, kind Sir, I humbly pray
Your honour to increase my pay;
For which great help I'll daily say
A prayer to heaven that you may
Long life, prosperity enjoy,
And all your childs be blessed boy.

A LEGEND OF JORHAT.

The D. C. frowned at the office peon
The A. C. gaily whistled a tune;
And the funny old puttawalla swore,
And called the babu, a wretched bore.
The babu snivelled and shouted with rage,
And threatened to cut the karkun's wage.
And, in this way, the red tape ran
From the Courthouse dim to the Police van;
And the jolly old prisoners jostled with glee
To see the rage of the Babujee.
And the khaki-clad policeman got a fright,
And fell on the ground like a man when he's tight;
Then the sleepy horses woke with a start,
And bolted away with the prison cart.
Then out came Banks the fierce D. C.
And cursed like—'ll at the Babujee.
And the whistles blew in Jorhat town,
And the news spread up and the news spread down,
That two fierce murderers were at large
In the Police van with none in charge;
And the townfolk shook at the knees with fear
And buried their jewels and gold by the seer.
Night came on, the excitement grew,
Folk and police were looking blue,

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For though they had swiftly followed the trail
To catch the prisoners they all did fail,
And Sheik Tewari, and Mullik Bajh
Two fearful villains, were still at large;
Both dreadful scoundrels, they still tell how
They helped each other to murder—a cow!

HOME LEAVE.

Blow the hoeing and plucking boy,
Hang the garden I say,
And the squelch of a heat that knocks you beat,
'Tis a price that we all must pay;
Thank God! we've finished
For eight long months and a spell,
We're going away on leave to-day,
To a Heaven from out of a Hell.

Sailing along the Ocean, over the Seas we'll go
To England or Scotland or Ireland,
Wherever the South winds blow.
Eight long months of enjoyment
To gain the strength that we've lost,
And to lose I wot, the Assam Rot, whatever may be the cost!

Just think, we'll soon be in London,
Walking along the Strand,
Watching the English lassies
Or hearing an English band.
Then of course, we'll see the latest
They've got in the way of plays
And spend, I propose, together,
Ten very happy days.

When they're over we'll part there Tom, boy,
And you'll go to your home in the North,
Where you'll spend long days in eating
Porridge and haggis and broth.

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While I will go to Dublin,
And live with Paddy the Pig,
And blarney with all the Colleens,
And watch them dancing the jig
Blow the work to-day boy,
Put it out of your mind,
Just pack your traps, we'll leave no gaps,
When we leave this country behind.
I'm all of a diddher entirely
And can't get anything done,
You're going right now, and I don't care how,
But I'm coming with you, my Son!

THE RETIRED PLANTER'S SONG.

Give me a life of freedom
Where I can do as I please,
And a comradeship that is merry
With certain moments of ease.
None of these hard-fast rules of life,
And that blessed highbrow air,
But plenty of work all day, my lads,
In a land that is really fair!

So I sit on my old grey pony
And suck away at my pipe,
And think of the men I called my friends,
In a friendship strong and ripe.
Good fellows all, they lived their lives,
And each one had his day;
Then they passed from the ken of the "left-behinds,"
And silently went their way.

"Shop" was always the topic,
"Tea," and the prices of tea,
Ponies, of course we loved them,
Who could not love a gee?

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Only a man with a soul depraved,
And a stunted ape-like brain,
A useless good-for-nothing thing
That to call him man were vain.

Polo we spoke of often
And the teams that we would meet,
Which we hoped, though we hadn't the ponies,
That by our play we'd beat.
And then we spoke of the ladies,
'Twas no sentimental rot,
But we gave them the honour always
And respected them quite a lot.

Yes, give me a life of freedom,
Far from the crowd's wild gaze,
In an old Assam tea garden
'Mongst the coolies and their quaint ways,
And even the drip of the raindrops,
And the swelt'ring Summer's heat.
Will seem to me like a godsend,
Will be to me quite a treat.

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